BELL BOOKS

Sai Baba
AND HIS MESSAGE

Edited by

Dr. S. P. Ruhela
Dr. Duane Robinson

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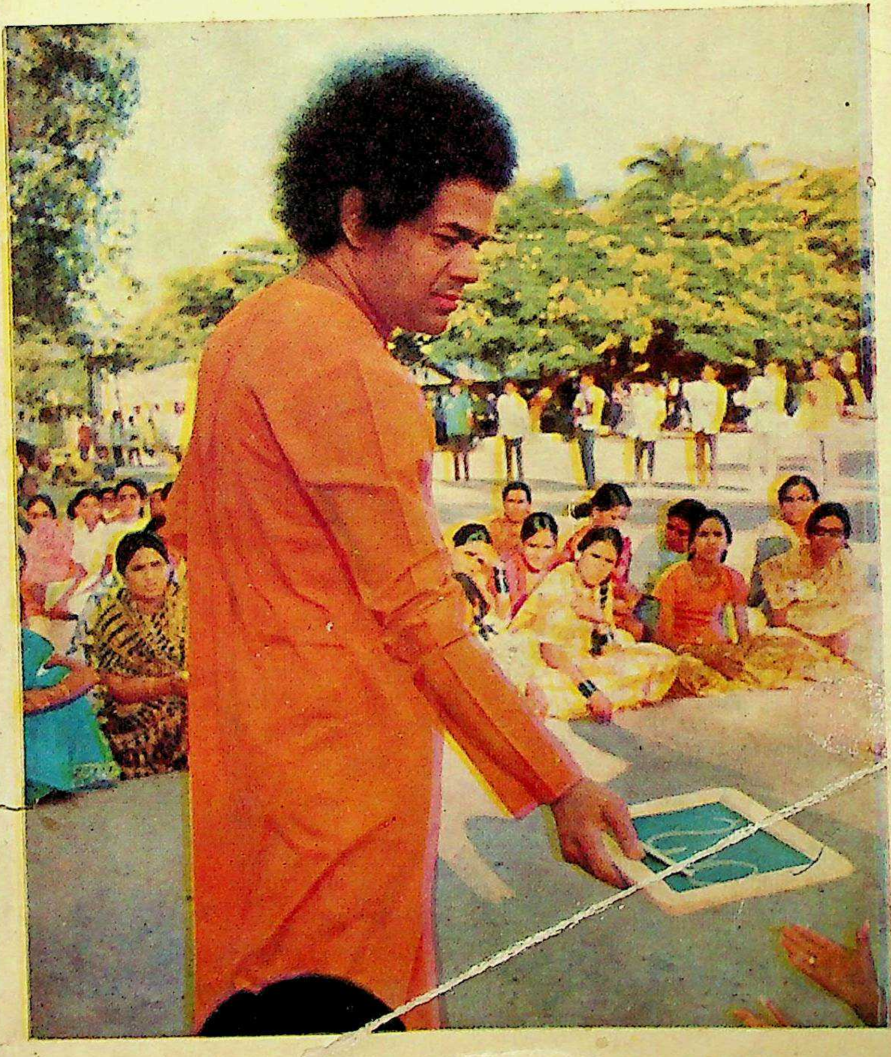

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The subject of this fascinating book is Sai Baba, a Divine incarnation, whose declared mission is "to reconstruct the ancient highway to God." Born in November 1926 in a tiny village in Andhra Pradesh, he demonstrated extraordinary powers even as a child. At the age of fourteen He ceased attending school and began His Mission. Today His influence is worldwide and His miracles defy all explanation.

This is the first scientific attempt to understand the phenomena of Sai Baba. The contributors are sociologists, historians, psychologists, and psychiatrists, who, coming in contact with Baba's unique spiritual presence, found their concepts, theories, values, and ideologies reduced to ashes. Clearly his existence poses a challenge to scientists and philosophers to develop new tools to understand a higher order of things.

Also included are reports of several devotees of Sai Baba who have repeatedly witnessed His mysteries and miracles and who have benefited both materially and spiritually from them.

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SAI BABA AND HIS MESSAGE

A Challenge to Behavioural Sciences

State Museum Library
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Lucknow

Edited by
Dr SATYA PAL RUHELA,
Dr DUANE ROBINSON

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FOREWORD

I have been asked to write a foreword to this volume edited by Dr Satya Pal Ruhela and his co-editor Professor Duane Robinson from the United States. I do so with great pleasure.

The fiftieth birth anniversary of Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba is indeed a golden moment for Sathya Sai devotees and students of Baba's life and personality. Several significant books have been scheduled for publication by that time and this is one of them. Two eminent academicians have collected and edited the contributions to this volume. Baba's writings included here are pure nectar, both from the point of view of content and of the simplicity with which the content is expounded. They are absorbed into our system like mother's milk.

The book deals with various facets of Baba's so-called challenge to the behavioural sciences. There are contributions which deal specifically with the reconstruction imminent in education, in the life of the family and the community, psychotherapy and religion. Dr M.V.N. Murthy points out how the fundamental approach of science coincides with the basic questions of the ancient Indian rishis. An interesting contribution on the Sai Baba movement reveals a seasoned and well-reasoned analytical approach to the history of mysticism and spirituality. Other contributions to this section deal with religious and para-psychological phenomena. These last lend themselves to various interpretations.

Especially moving are the experiences of Sai devotees. The experience of one individual differs from that of another. There is, therefore, immense variety in this section, revealing the many-facetedness of Baba's personality. Each contribution is full of transparent sincerity. Parapsychology dominates quite a few of the contributions to this volume. This is possibly because the miraculousness of Baba is the trait that impresses itself indelibly on the observer in the initial stages.

This volume is a valuable contribution to the Sathya Sai literature that is steadily growing and I welcome it with great pleasure.

Dr Vinayak Krishna Gokak

Convener
Shri Sathya Sai Education & Publication Foundation,
Kadugodi, Whitefield, Bangalore.

PREFACE

Rolland Robertson, editor of *Sociology of Religion* (Penguin, 1969), in his Introduction, has observed that "one of the most intriguing intellectual phenomena in the mid-twentieth century is the widespread interest in religion at a time when there is also extensive agreement that religious belief, as traditionally understood, has markedly declined in its *intrinsic* significance for most members of modern societies."

The importance of religion in generating and storing values and beliefs related to the meaning, purpose, and significance of man's life, as was studied by classical sociologists like Emile Durkheim of France and Max Weber of Germany, is again being studied in modern times. Modern sociologists view the study of religion as part of a general study of culture and knowledge. They are committed to a distinctive and wide-ranging perspective derived from within their own discipline, and to that extent they are able to ask questions which relate to all religions on a comparative basis or to distill out social features of one or a group of religious beliefs and the social processes by which and through which beliefs are maintained and expressed. Unlike the religious sociologist, the sociologist of religion seeks to illuminate the relationships between religion and other aspects of a society, such as its economics, politics, or science.

The editors of this volume are not religious sociologists. They also are not sociologists of religion of any considerable standing. They are sociologists whose interests range from institutional change, education, culture, science and knowledge to religion, folk-lore and mythology. In this volume they have included a number of articles in which are discussed a most surprising phenomenon—a Divine human being who lives and teaches today, and whose diverse works can be observed and studied and their meaning sought. The authors are behavioural scientists, included among whom are sociologists, historians, philosophers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and educators.

There are also a number of articles written by devotees of this avatar, or divine being, who is more than holy man or saint. They have described some of the miraculous experiences they have had since He came into their lives. These latter descriptions have been included in this volume for two reasons. First, they will provide some basic data for behavioural scientists throughout the world to study seriously and to comment upon, and, second, they will help to enlighten further some of the millions of persons in both the east and west who are fascinated with these rare phenomena of the existence, activities, influence, and exercise of spiritual will, of an incarnation of God in human form whose declared mission is to "reconstruct the ancient highway to God."

The subject of this volume is Sathya Sai Baba. He was born on 23 November 1926 in a tiny Indian village, Puttaparthi, in the Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh State. Many books have been written about His life and works. Two of these directed to readers in India and in western countries are *The Life of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba,* by N. Kasturi, and *Sai Baba—Man of Miracles,* by Howard Murphet. Kasturi, an Indian scholar and writer, who has been a devotee and close collaborator of Sai Baba for many years, describes in considerable detail the Avatar's birth and childhood, the beginnings of His spiritual Mission, and much information about His life and works. Murphet, an Australian, effectively summarizes the early years of Sai Baba's life, and then reports his experiences and those of many more persons who over the years of Sai Baba's Mission, have been witnesses and beneficiaries of His powers, and of His kindness and loving care for them.

It is enough at this point to explain that Sai Baba has lived during most of His fifty years in and near the Indian village in which He was born. As a child He demonstrated some of the extraordinary powers that were to flower later. At the age of fourteen He ceased attending school and began His Mission, restoring people's knowledge of, and faith in, the spiritual heritage of India, and ever-emphasizing the basic principles of Satya (Truth), Dharma (Righteousness), Shanti (Peace), and Prema (Love) as keys to the spiritual growth of human kind.

He spends much time at his ashram, Prasanthi Nilayam, near Puttaparthi. At the four colleges he has established so far, one a girls' college at Anantapur in Andhra Pradesh, one at Whitefield in Bangalore, one at Jaipur, and one at Bhopal. He has embarked upon the great task of the educational reconstruction in India. He has declared that there will be further development in this direction. He travels throughout India, spending a portion of each year speaking to millions of people and blessing and encouraging persons from all parts of the world.

Sathya Sai Samiti groups of devotees are organized in thousands of Indian communities, and many Sai Baba Centres and groups operate in other countries. These groups conduct varied programmes of a spiritual nature, carry on social service activities, maintain classes for children to encourage their cultural and spiritual growth, and carry on other activities and programmes enhancing the spiritual life of Sai devotees and interested seekers.

Sai Baba addresses His attention to a wide range of profound issues in His discourses and astounds scientists, philosophers, scholars, and religious leaders with a superhuman grasp of knowledge and skill in many areas. He speaks with great love to children and youth, and students are His special concern. He enlightens the audiences of thousands who flock to see Him, which confers a special blessing on the viewer, and to hear His simple and yet profound discourses in which He draws from the scriptures of all major world religions. All of this vast knowledge He possesses without having apparently read or studied the huge literature required for such knowledge. He speaks on any spiritual subject with miraculous authenticity, clarity, simplicity, and eloquence.

He has declared, and proved in countless cases, that He fully knows the past, present, and future of every person, living and dead, in the world. In an interview or personal contact He discloses the innermost thoughts of a person instantly. "It is not," He says, "that I first enter your mind, probe it, then come out and tell you what you are thinking or feeling. Actually I am always residing in your mind and so I am fully aware of all that goes on therein at all times. There is nothing hidden from Me." Countless numbers of visitors to Him have experienced this unique Godly phenomenon, have been thunderstruck, and finally have received His spiritual suggestions on how to improve their character and morality. Millions of His devotees understand Him to be the greatest living saint or incarnation of God on earth.

Sai Baba has served, inspired, and instructed unnumbered thousands of devotees, sceptics, critics, and curiousity seekers through the years with some profound spiritual powers. One of these is His widely observed and reported capacity to heal the sicknesses and infirmities of people by blessing them, giving them healing substances, and by other means. Murphet cites many instances of healing in his report, and the following pages will discuss His healing and therapeutic power further.

Another important area of His power discussed in this book is the ability to respond immediately to prayers or cries for help from devotees often hundreds or thousands of miles away by appearing at the site and taking action by materializing gifts of vibhuti (sacred ash) or other things in their homes, by causing messages to appear for them, and so on. This divine "television and teleprinter" that Baba conducts has surprised and baffled physical scientists of India and abroad who have seen their laws of physics fall before Baba's miracles. They have ultimately learned the great lesson, that His Divine Will indeed can create anything anywhere, and instantly.

Devoted Christians have testified that they find in Sai Baba glimpses of their Christ. The Hindus find in Him the living images of Shiva, Shakti, Krishna, Rama, or their family dieties. The Muslims call Him Allah, and people of other religions find in Him their own conception of God. He is secular, casteless, classless, countryless, religionless, fearless, and full of the love of a thousand mothers. His eyes have a rare calmness and electrifying effect. In silence He talks with His devotees, and while talking one can perceive the tranquillity of the highly divine personality.

He has declared that no power in this world can deter or hinder Him in the fulfillment of His plan for the establishment of righteousness in this materialistic world of the twentieth century. "No Avatar has done like this before—going to the masses, counselling them, guiding them, consoling them, uplifting them, directing them along the path of Satya, Dharma, Shanti, and Prema," He states. He has declared that He has come "in order to achieve the supreme task of uniting as one family the whole of mankind through the bond of brotherhood, of affirming and illumining the divine reality of each human in order to reveal the divinity which is the basis upon which the entire cosmos rests, and of instructing all people to recognize the common divine heritage that binds human to human, so that each one can rise into the divinity which is the supreme goal of human endeavour." And He further states, "Love is My instrument."

In November 1975 Sai Baba will be fifty. He declares that His Mission so far has been to lay the groundwork, the foundation, for His work in the next forty-five years, during which waves of spiritual energy will sweep over the world, and an unprecedented era of peace, happiness, and brotherhood will emerge. To this end thousands of young, pious, intelligent, loving and creative boys and girls presently receiving their education in His classes, courses and Colleges will be leaders in the moral and spiritual renaissance which He is leading.

A number of western physical scientists and behavioural scientists in recent years have come in contact with Sai Baba. They have seen Him, experienced Him, variously experimented upon Him and tried to expose some aspect of His powers as something other than divine spiritual powers. These latter have been humbled and their previous concepts, theories, values, and ideologies reduced to ashes. But their understanding of a more fundamental spiritual reality has been enriched, they having been immersed in the unique flow of His spiritual presence and influence.

Many Indian scholars also have seen, experienced, and benefited from Sai Baba, but most of the Indian philosophers, scientists, and educators have not yet been able to comprehend the unique spiritual and social transformation of mankind that seems to be presently taking place in the world, with its nucleus in India, developing under the impact of the work of this Divine incarnation. There are many scientists both in India and the west who deny, cannot accept, the reality of this spiritual phenomenon, due to their reliance on the limited and faulty theories and frames of reference developed by modern science, the materialism, pseudo empiricism, limited ideas of reality and narrowly defined methodology and disciplines under which scientists generally labour currently.

However, there are many modern scientists who are approaching whatever phenomena they are studying, particularly the complex phenomena of men's relations with their environment and with each other, with a new point of view, that it is not enough to strive dispassionately to describe some phenomenon in disciplined, objective, and orderly terms, within science's traditional materialistic conceptual frameworks but they must seek an understanding within a larger framework of purpose and relationship.

They are asking "why," and "what for," what higher purpose and intention and divine energy may be involved in this element's existence. Scientists and philosophers find themselves drawn together, both to develop some understanding of this higher order of things and to develop the tools of understanding and description.

Questions take on new meaning, questions of values, of highest good, of connections between phenomena observed and cosmic and spiritual phenomena and forces not observable or measurable with the limited tools of science. The new methodology requires the scientist to probe into himself in a way he has not done before, and to seek new meanings beyond those his hypotheses arrived at by traditional means had comprehended.

It is our belief that the challenges emerging out of the unique Sai Baba phenomenon must be examined, understood, and discussed by behavioural scientists seriously and without delay. Sai Baba, however, has declared that no one, particularly no one utilizing the limited tools of the sciences, may understand or unravel the mysteries of His life, works or powers. He urges them to approach Him openly, to get immersed in His love and to enjoy His grace. Yet, true to the spirit of their several scientific and philosophical disciplines, modern scholars must strive to study, discuss, and understand better the challenge of Sai Baba's unique presence and works and their impacts on the society of our day.

Sai Baba challenges scientists to approach their problems with the recognition that the order in nature reflects a broader order in the cosmic whole, that the purpose in nature, in all life, and in the existence of man, the focus of behavioural scientists, is reflective of a broader cosmic purpose in the Universe.

This purpose, in one aspect, is the gradual evolution of life toward perfection, of balance and mutual fulfillment. Man's fulfillment of the cosmic intention is evolution to higher states of consciousness of the Cosmic or Divine Reality with which ultimately all life's purpose merges. The task of scientists is to grapple with this order of reality, to understand it, and to deal with its implications for their several fields. Thus, Sai Baba challenges science to address itself to another more demanding, dazzling and significant task than its traditional one of circumscribed description and accurate analysis, at the level of material data its present tools produce. New purposes, new perspectives, new tools, and development of new capabilities are demanded.

As a preview of some of the ideas found in the following pages, let us present a miniature portrait of some of these challenges to the behavioral scientists, and the profound depth of His teachings:

According to Baba, the human animal is more related to tree-dwelling apes than to the ground-dwelling varieties.

Sociologists' materialist theories, theories of change, conflict theories, reference group theory, the social or cultural context of problems, do not find favour in Baba's teachings.

Psychologists and psychiatrists find their "modern" theories and methods of psychological analysis and psychotherapy critically limited and distorted in contrast to the theory and practice of Sai Baba's healing.

Educators find in Baba's eloquent discourses on the themes of Bal Vikas, spiritual education, youth development, the role of teachers or learning methods, challenging food for thought.

Students of religion find knotty problems of religion, spirituality, the purpose of man's life on earth, and so on solved by Sai Baba in an emphatic, profound, and intellectually satisfying manner.

Historians and archaeologists in India, who are confused or ignorant about the historical authenticity of Rama, Krishna, the Mahabharat war, Christ's life and works, and so on can find guidance and clues from the discourses of the omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent Sai Baba.

Experts in public administration find their theories shaken by Sai Baba's dictum, "Love is the flywheel of an organization." Bureaucracies and administrative processes, idealized in the theories of Weber and Merton, in practice have been functioning to the serious disadvantage of human service and human welfare by their tendency toward distrust, defensiveness, and rigidity, their differential treatment of both personnel and clientele, and so on.

Social workers and practitioners in the social service disciplines find an eminent challenge in Sai Baba's theories that service to others is the expression of man's innate Divinity, that service to others is nothing but service to one's own self, that one must serve all since all are sparks of the same Supreme Soul, and that service without self-serving tendencies is the only real service.

Philosophers may now see, in a more vivid portrayal, the outlines of the great philosophical and spiritual renaissance which has been nurtured in India by Kabir, Shankaracharya, Chaitanya, Raja Rammohan Roy, Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, Shirdi Sai Baba, and Gandhi. They may see how Sai Baba explains the Gita, Mahabharat, Ramayana, instances from the lives of Christ, Mohammed, etc. in a modern analytical framework, without cultural myopia, bigotry, or traditionalism.

Contributors to this volume have tried to touch on some of these subjects in their writings. They have undertaken to understand and discuss Sai Baba, His teachings and His works, and their impact on the fields of knowledge of the behavioural scientists as accurately and straight forwardly as was possible. Also included are the reports of several devotees of Sai Baba who have witnessed His mysteries and miracles and have benefited both materially and spiritually from them. These reports are the material for study and comment of behavioural scientists.

There are several other aspects of Sai Baba's life and works that need close and serious study by behavioural scientists: His super-charismatic personality; the transformations evident in the motives, behaviours, values, and ideas of His devotees and those who visit Him; the emergence of new casteless and classless social cohesion among His millions of devotees; the working of thousands of Sai Seva Samitis and groups of devotees; His influence on the business ethics of His businessmen devotees, all of these need research, a task to be taken up in future years.

We hope that the present work will prove to be of utility to scientists, philosophers, and others who wish to understand Sai Baba and His Mission. And to the millions of Sai devotees in the world it should give further stimulus to their devotion, discipline, and spiritual growth.

We offer our deepest gratitude to Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba, who approved this project and whose inner guidance and motivation in this venture have been profound. We ask for His blessings on our cooperative effort, and forgiveness for our mistakes and shortcomings. The book is most reverently dedicated to Him.

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Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba giving His Darshan to a group of devotees in his "Brindavan" Ashram at Whitefield, which appears on the cover of this book.

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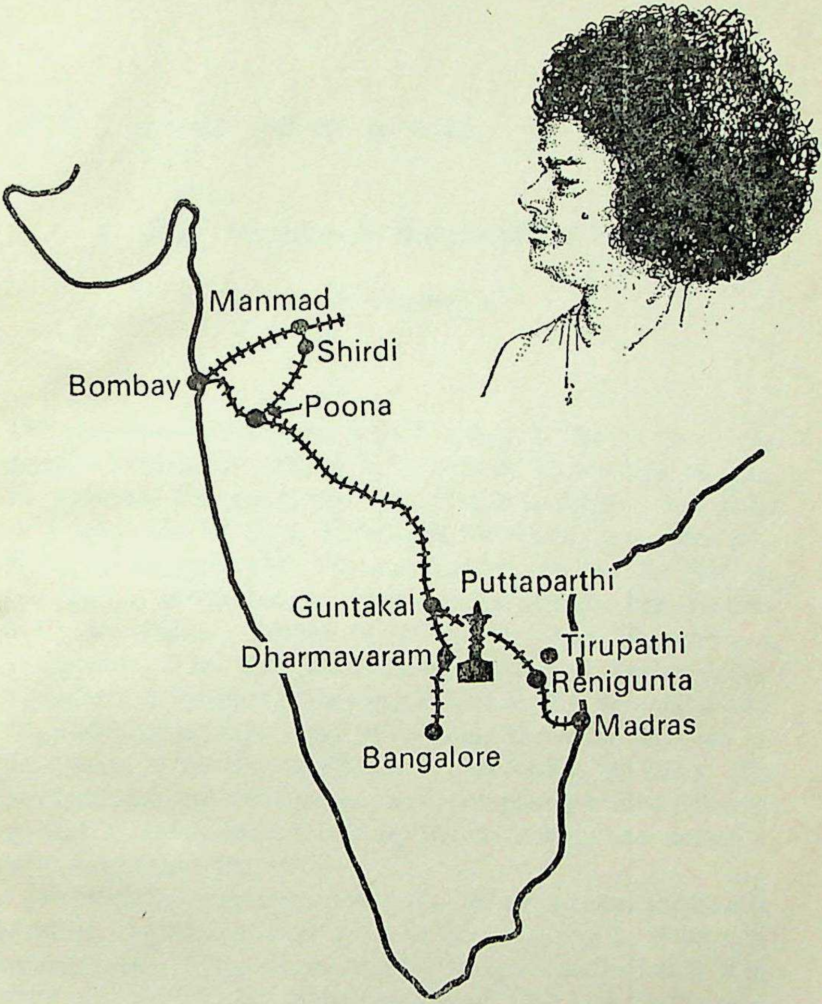

Location of Sai Baba's Ashram

SECTION ONE—THE LIFE OF SAI BABA

1. SAI BABA—A Biographical Sketch

DR S.P. RUHELA

The subject of this volume is Shri Sathya Sai Baba who is the greatest living saint claiming to be the full Incarnation of God. He possesses the miraculous characteristics, powers, and glory of a full avatar of God, the criteria for which have been laid down in the Bhagvat Gita, the most sacred scripture of the Hindus, and also by the leading spiritual masters of India like Yogiraj Shri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, and Paramhansa Yogananda. The German sociologist Max Weber's classic analysis of a Prophet possessing charisma of a very high and benevolent order falls short of revealing the super-charisma of the Divine personality of Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba. His omnipresence and omnipotence have completely baffled physical as well as behavioural scientists, not to talk of the common man throughout the world.

His official biographer Professor N. Kasturi as well as thousands of those who have had the great fortune of going to Baba and receiving His Divine Grace personally, have testified that it is wrong to approach Sai Baba considering Him just a man or a saint of high order. In fact, it is the net common experience of millions of Indians and foreigners who have had His darshan in person or in dreams and have derived great solace, cures, blessings or Grace from Him, that He is in fact Sarva Devta Swaroop or the combined incarnation of all the gods and goddesses rolled into one.

It is indeed difficult, if not impossible, for any human being to cover, comprehend, analyze, understand, and then to write a profile of the life and personality of such a unique Divine Personality. Anybody who has attempted to do so is confronted with Baba's following declarations:

> My *Shakti*, My Power, My Mystery can never be understood, whoever may try, for however long a period, by whatever means.
>
> Baba is beyond the keenest intellect, the sharpest brain.... So do not try to delve into Me; develop faith and veneration and derive Joy through Prema. That is the utmost you can do; do that and benefit.
>
> ... how can the limited know the depth of the unlimited? How can the ant delve into the mountain? It is beyond you to know how or why I create things in My Hand.

I approach the task being fully aware of these insuperable difficulties and acutely conscious of my limitations. I pray to the Divine Indweller of everybody's heart, Sai Baba, to shower His Grace on me and enable me to do it well.

METHODOLOGY

I have tried to prepare this sociological profile of Sai Baba by putting to the best possible use the various methods of scientific social survey and research learned by me as a student of sociology and social anthropology and also my knowledge about Baba based on the study of all available books on Shri Sathya Sai Baba and His immediately preceding incarnation, Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi. I have enjoyed the Grace of Shri Sathya Sai Baba since April 1973. I had His first darshan in New Delhi in April 1973, just for two or three minutes, as one standing in the small crowd gathered outside the gate of the house He was staying in. In February 1974, I visited His ashram, Prashanti Nilayam, located near Puttaparthi. I stayed there for four days and participated in the festival of Shiva-Ratri grandly celebrated there. I utilized this opportunity, granted by His Grace, to visit the village where He spent His childhood and went to the houses of His elder brother and elder sister.I had a brief talk with His elder brother Shri Seshma Raju and his wife, with whom Baba had lived and studied as a high school student till He renounced His school education and the worldly life to play His predetermined role.

I met some people in the village, in the shops outside Baba's ashram, and also many devotees—Indians and foreigners. I heard from them a large number of stories about Baba's thrilling miracles, divine connections, transformations and moods. I did not have the good fortune of speaking to Baba till then. In June 1974, I had the great fortune of being invited, on my fervent request which was granted by Baba and Professor V.K. Gokak, Director of the Summer Course, to come to Brindavanam, Whitefield (Bangalore), another of Sai Baba's ashrams, to stay in Baba's residence as His guest, and to deliver two lectures on "Educational Reconstruction in India" to the participants of the Third Summer Course on Spirituality and Indian Culture.

I stayed there for four days and tried to observe with an objective eye everything I could within that short period. I heard about Baba and His miraculous powers from His close devotees like Justice Bala Krishna Eradi of Kerala High Court and Professor C.N. Shastry of Nellore who had also been invited by Baba to lecture to the participants of that Summer Course. I closely observed the moods, behaviour, and actions of Baba, and also those of the organizers of that Summer Course and of the students of Shri Sathya Sai College of Arts and Commerce, Brindavanam (Whitefield), whose lives are being shaped by Baba Himself with His Divine guidance and Love. Baba very kindly granted me a few minutes' interview in the night preceding my departure from that place. I had His darshan in Whitefield in December 1974, and then for a number of days in New Delhi in April 1975 I have attended Sai bhajan sessions in Delhi, and have come in very close contact with many devotees of Baba, and have myself become an ardent devotee.

My limitations have been of not coming in Baba's contact over a long number of years, and secondly, I did not have the privilege of being present at interviews or accompanying His entourage when He was travelling. I have indeed observed only a little of Baba from close quarters, and therefore, my experiences and knowledge about Him are far less than those of His greatly fortunate devotees and close associates like Professor N. Kasturi, Professor V.K. Gokak, Professor S. Bhagavantam, Shri Raja Reddy, Howard Murphet and several others. However, I have tried to make up for this by reading His biographies by Professor N. Kasturi, Howard Murphet, and Shri T.S. Anantha Murthy, and His Divine Discourses published in seven volumes and in the monthly issues of Baba's journal, *Sanatana Sarathi.*

BIRTH OF THE INCARNATION OF SAI BABA

Shri Sathya Sai Baba was born on 23 November 1926 in a very tiny, hilly, isolated village called Puttaparthi in the Anantapur District of the present Andhra Pradesh State of India. Not only His father Shri Pedda Venkappa Raju, but His grandfather Shri Ratnakaram Kondama Raju and one ancestor Shri Venkavadhoota had been very pious, religious-minded people belonging to the Raju lineage of the Kshatriyas. It was a very ordinary lower middle class family, which was dependent on some farming. The family had rich musical, literary and dramatic traditions. Sai Baba's mother Shrimati Eswaramma was also a very religious woman like Her mother-in-law Shrimati Lakshamma.

Shri Pedda Venkappa Raju and Shrimati Eswaramma were divinely blessed with a son Seshama Raju (who became a school teacher) and two daughters, Venkamma and Parvathamma. The fourth child was Sathya Narayan Raju, now known as Shri Sathya Sai Baba. He was born in a small house of about 50 square yards. That place has now been deserted by the family. Evidently, neither Sai Baba nor any of His relatives, devotees, or villagers have shown any interest in constructing a memorial on the spot where Baba was born, possibly because Baba does not like temples devoted to Him and He does not like to maintain personal links with His blood relatives, in the best traditions of an unattatched sanyasi, prophet, or incarnation of God. His brother's family and His sister's family live in their separate houses near the old family house site. Their houses are still very small, perhaps less than 80 square yards each, with very small rooms, very ordinarily decorated like the other houses of the village.

Months before Shri Sathya Narayan Raju's birth, a number of miracles started taking place in the house. Musical instruments like the tambura and maddala (drum) would often emit sounds suddenly and melodiously at night, without anybody playing upon them. A cobra snake appeared under the newly born baby. Often the baby would cover His face with vibhuti which appeared in His tiny hands mysteriously.

At the age of fourteen, Shri Sathya Narayan Raju disclosed to His parents and brother and the people around Him that He was in fact the incarnation of Sai Baba of Shirdi village (now in Maharashtra). Sai Baba of Shirdi, whose real name was Babu, was the third child of a Brahmin boatman, Shri Ganga Bhavadia of Patri village near Manmad town, and his wife Shrimati Devagiriamma. Shri Sathya Sai Baba has now disclosed that Lord Shiva and His consort Parvathi had blessed the pious lady Devagiriamma that Lord Shiva Himself would be born as their next son.

While the wife was pregnant, the husband suddenly lost all interest in worldly life and persuaded his wife also to become a sanyasi. The wife gave birth to a son in the forest under a banyan tree. She placed the child on the ground, covered it with banyan leaves, and hastened after her husband. The child was picked up after a few hours by a childless pair, Shri Patil and his wife. They brought up the child as their own son.

While the child was young, only a boy, Shri Patil died. The widow found the boy doing many strange things like going to the Hindu temple and reciting the Quran there, installing a Shiva Linga in the Muslim mosque, etc. Unable to curb these activities, the step-mother sent him to an ashram run by a hermit named Venkusa. The hermit was very attached to Babu, for Lord Shiva had appeared in his dream and told him that in Babu He was himself coming to his ashram. Once a group of boys of the ashram beat Babu and hurt his head with a brick. Babu went away from that ashram forever with that brick which he kept as his most priceless possession till his old age.

Thereafter he was brought up by a Muslim fakir. He appeared in the village of Shirdi in 1858 as a young fakir of about sixteen years of age. He was welcomed there, and given the name of "Sai" (which means Holy Father) by Mhlasapati, a devoted villager of Shirdi who was the first to welcome Him as he alighted a bullock cart there. He lived in the Shirdi village till 1918 under the name of Sai Baba.

His life, so very faithfully recorded by his biographer Shri N.V. Gunaji and many other writers, was indeed very miraculous. Although a Brahmin by birth, he lived like a Muslim fakir in a mosque called Dwarka Mai, burning dhooni(Holy fire) and curing, advising, consoling Hindu as well as Muslim devotees, by the miraculous Holy Ash of his dhooni. He laid the foundation of Hindu-Muslim unity. He had prophesied before his death that he would be reborn eight years later. Shri Sathya Narayan Raju, the present incarnation of Shirdi Sai Baba, was born exactly eight years after the latter's nirvana in 1918.

While giving a discourse in Goa in 1968, Sai Baba disclosed for the first time that He belonged to the clan of Bhardwaj Rishis who had secured the great boon from Lord Shiva that He (Lord Shiva) and His consort would be born thrice in the Kali Age — in the first birth as incarnation of Lord Shiva (Shirdi Sai Baba was that incarnation); in the second birth as the combined incarnation of Shiva and Shakti (Shri Sathya Sai Baba is that incarnation; He is also called Ardhnariswar or half-man and half-woman God); and in the third birth as incarnation of Shakti (Shiva's consort). Sai Baba has prophesied that He will be called Prem Sai Baba, and will be born in Mandaya District of Karnatak State after His passing away on attaining the age of ninety-five, i.e., in 2021.

In the First World Conference of Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations at Bombay on 17 May 1968, He declared:

> This is a human form, in which every Divine entity, every Divine Principle, that is to say, all the names and forms ascribed by men to God, are manifest . . . . You are fortunate that you have a chance to experience the bliss of the vision of the *Sarvadaivatwa-swarupam* [the form which is all forms of all gods] now, in this life itself.

CHILDHOOD

The first sixteen years of Baba's life have been the period when Bal-leela (mysterious and joyous activities of childhood) predominated. The next sixteen years were spent mostly in Mahimas (Glorious activities) in order "to give santosh (contentment) to this generation." After the thirty-second year, Baba has been increasingly active in the task of "updesa or teaching erring humanity and directing the world along the path of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, and Prema." According to Baba, He will live in His present human form till the age of ninety-five, i.e. till 2021, by which time humanity will have improved considerably.

In His childhood, Sathya Narayan Raju endeared Himself to all His relatives, villagers, and teachers by His gentle and pleasing personality, extraordinary intelligence, great interest in dancing, singing, composing religious songs, cooking for the family, serving beggars, and insistence on vegetarianism. He would often amuse and surprise His schoolmates by materialising from nothing, sweets, toffies, lemon-drops, pencils, rubbers, vibhuti etc.

He would take part in village dramas, scouting, and acts of social service. For some time He joined a circus party to sing and dance in it. On 23 May 1940, He disclosed to His father and other members of the family, "I am Sai Baba. I belong to Apastamba Sutra, the school of Sage Apastamba and am of the spiritual lineage of Bhardwaja Rishi. I am Sai Baba of Shirdi. I have come to ward off your troubles; keep your houses clean and pure."

On 20 October 1940, when He was just a child of fourteen studying in class VIII in the Government High School, Urvakonda where His elder brother Shri Seshama Raju was working as a teacher, he returned to His brother's house soon after His going to school in the morning. Standing on the outer doorsteps, He cast aside his books and called out,"I am no longer your Sathya. I am Sai." His sister-in-law came out from the kitchen and peeped out; she was almost blinded by the splendour of the halo around Sathya's head. She closed her eyes and shrieked. Baba addressed her, "I am going, I don't belong to you. Illusion has gone. My devotees are calling Me. I have My work. I cannot stay any longer."

Soon His brother came running. Baba said to him, "Give up all your efforts to cure Me. I am Sai. I do not consider Myself related to you." He moved into the garden of a neighbour, Shri Anjaneyulu's, and sat on a rock in the midst of the trees. People came into the garden from all directions bringing flowers and fruits. Child Sai Baba taught them His first bhajan there:

"*Manas Bhaj Re Guru Charanam, Duster Bhawsagar Tarnam.*" (Mediate in thy mind on the Feet of the Guru, for it alone can take you across the difficult sea of existence in birth after birth.)

After three days, His mother and father arrived and pleaded with Him to come home. He retorted, "Who belongs to whom? It is all illusion—untrue." Ultimately, the parents were able to persuade Him to return to their village Puttaparthi, on His condition that He would live outside the family home, and henceforth they would abstain from ridiculing Him or disturbing His task of meeting devotees.

In His village, Sai Baba stayed in the house of a Brahmin neighbour Shrimati Subamma for a number of years during adolescence. She looked after Him and His innumerable devotees pouring into her house from all directions of India, comfortably in the spirit of highest devotion and service through their hospitability.

In 1949, the idea to build a separate ashram for Baba and His devotees occurred to some devotees and Baba blessed it. The construction started on several acres of land, about a mile from Puttaparthi. Baba Himself designed, supervised, and helped the construction work of the Worship Hall and other buildings in the ashram, which was inaugurated on 23 November 1950, twenty-third birthday of Baba. It was named "Prashanti Nilayam" or "Abode of Peace."

Since then, it has been the main centre of Baba's activities. A small ashram, located near the Whitefield Railway Station and Kadugodi village in the outskirts of Bangalore city, has a small building where Baba lives in the summer, and another building which houses the Shri Sathya Sai College of Arts and Commerce started by Him. A third ashram has recently been started at Ootakamund in the Nilgiri Hills, where Baba will stay during the summer, and summer courses on Spirituality and Indian Culture organised by Him may be held in future.

SAI BABA'S MISSION

"I have come to reconstruct the ancient highway to God." "My task is the spiritual regeneration of humanity through truth and love." "My main tasks are fostering the Vedas and fostering devotees." "This Sai has come in order to achieve the supreme task of uniting as one family the entire mankind, through the bond of brotherhood, of affirming and illumining the Atmic Reality of each being in order to reveal the Divine which is the Basis on which the entire Cosmos rests."

This is how Baba has declared His mission. In the fulfilment of these great declarations, Baba has, since the age of fourteen, been engaged in a surprising number of tasks for the welfare and spiritual regeneration of humanity. He operates at two levels. As a human being made of flesh and blood, he meets an ever-increasing number of people from all parts of the world, and does innumerable things for their cure, well-being, and moral uplift. "My life is My message"—with this declaration He exhorts us to be exemplary men and women.

More than this, He operates at the level of a mysterious Divine Spirit—as an omnipresent and omnipotent God in this Kali Age, busy every second of the twenty-four hours in showering His mysterious and miraculous graces in innumerable forms on a number of devotees as well as on those who do not follow Him and who out of ignorance and folly speak ill of Him. As one who knows the past, present, and future life of each one of the human beings in this world, He is busy dispensing divine justice to us for our actions and in helping us to feel contented, materially as well as spiritually.

He has also the great and unique task of administering to the world of souls—departed souls as well as souls waiting to be reborn in human and other forms. It is He who grants moksha to deserving souls and decides the fate of others according to their actions. How is He able to accomplish all these surprisingly diverse, difficult and miraculous things with utmost poise and efficiency is the greatest of all His miracles. The simple answer given by Him is: "There is no mesmerism, miracle, or magic, in what I do! Mine is genuine Divine Power. I am Sarvadaivatwa-swarupam. I am Indweller of every heart."

Let us try to have a bird's eye view of Baba's activities. He daily gives His Holy darshan to devotees who go to His ashram or the places visited by Him. The sins, diseases, worries, and problems of many of them are dissolved by the Divine impact of His Discourses. He grants private interviews to those who have earned great merit in their past lives, as also to those who are suffering excessively due to a problem, disease, or calamity. He not only advises and consoles them but even materializes medicinal Holy Ash and other mysterious things—Jap Mala, rings, lockets, amulets, crosses, etc.

He personally, as well as in the form of an unseen or hidden Spirit, showers a fantastic range of graces on His devotees and even non-believers, depending upon their past karmas as well as His mere grace. He has, for the last forty years or so, been materializing many things miraculously, in His right hand, or out of, on or near His photos in devotees' houses hundreds or thousands of miles away in the different parts of the world. These have included lockets, rings, necklaces, or chains of gold, silver, panch dhatu (five metals rolled into one) etc., carrying the embossed or enamelled pictures of Shirdi Sai Baba, Shri Sathya Sai Baba, Lord Krishna, Lord Shiva etc., statues of various gods and goddesses of the Hindus, and crosses for the Christians, fine fragrant vibhuti, kumkum of various colours, amrita, Gangajal, honey, fruits, dry fruits, sweets, toffies, watches, medicines, religious scriptures like the Gita, photographs, Dollar coins, Sai stamps, Indian currency notes signed by Him with ball pen, His handwritten and signed Divine Messages or chits carrying His instructions, and numerous other objects.

These miraculous creations of Sai Baba are dealt with in detail in the Fourth Section of this book, in which ten devotees have very faithfully recorded their actual experiences. I have witnessed some of these mysterious graces of Baba in my house and in the houses of many devotees. The purpose of these miracles is just to inform the devotees that He had come to their houses and left these "visiting cards," and to encourage and help devotees in their journey on the path to spirituality.

Always true to the words or assurances given to His devotees, Baba invariably visits their houses in the form of either Sai Baba in flesh and blood, or in the form of any another person. Baba even appeared in the form of a small cobra just close to the boundary of my newly constructed house "Sai Prabha" at Faridabad on 28 October 1974, the day of its inauguration, sitting there like a gentle pet for over three and a half hours, from 4-30 p.m. to 8 p.m. after the Sai kirtan. He disappeared only after our performing His arati by offering Him flowers, food, prashad and singing, *"Om Jai Jagdish Hare, Swami Shri Sathya Sai Hare."* Baba had earlier agreed to come to my new house at its inauguration, in the interview granted by Him to me at Brindavanam on the night of 9 June 1974. Sai devotees all over the world have had many such thrilling experiences of receiving Sai Baba in many forms.

There may be many reasons for these mysterious appearances of Sai Baba, but the one which very well comes within my limited mental range is that Baba, by appearing in these various forms, is empirically demonstrating the great spiritual reality forgotten by twentieth century man, that God in fact resides in every living creature and so all persons, animals and birds etc. should be treated with compassion and respect.

Of the hundred and eight names of Baba chanted by every Sai devotee before starting the Sai Bhajan, one is *Apad Bandhawa* (the Brother who rushes to help the devotee at the moment of crisis). There are countless incidents reported, which empirically prove that this description of our Lord is indeed correct. In my family also, the mysterious, ever-present Spirit of Sai Baba at once rushed to our help at about 10-30 a.m. on 17 March 1975 when a frying pan full of boiling vegetable oil fell on my wife's feet due to the falling of the gas cylinder and the gas stove. The immediate application of the Holy haldi powder, which had miraculously appeared in the house of Miss Kiran Singh (a contributor to this volume and our neighbour), a few days earlier, helped in the miraculous cure of the parts of my wife's body. Not even the slightest burn or blister was caused on the skin, and her life was saved. The gas cylinder falling just near the burning stove did not burst by His Grace, and a very serious accident in the house was averted by Him. Sai Baba once disclosed to an American devotee that He never sleeps even for a second as all the time He is ready to rush forward to help devotees in distress. Out of His genuine love, He again and again relieves His devotees by taking on Himself their ailments. He has cured incurable ailments and mental disorders by giving personally or sending miraculously vibhuti on the photos of gods and goddesses in their shrines to be used by the sick person as medicine, or just by making His sankalpa (determination) in His Mind to cure the particular patient.

Baba's official biographer, Professor N. Kasturi has written in *Sathyam Shivam Sundaram* (Volume II, page 255) about another wonderful dimension of Baba's works:

> It will be a thrilling chapter, if one could collect and compile the events of the last days of the devotees of Baba, who have merged in Him, They die in silent serenity, in prayerful surrender, or in the midst of the *Bhajan* they share, or during the recitation of *Pranava* (Chanting of *OM*), they get *Amritha* from nowhere and sip it as they die; they see Baba before them with their departing sight and leave, after prostrating to Him; they have *Vibhuti* emanating from their heads, in token of His blessing! O, it is, amazingly sweet and heartening — the

way in which Baba showers His Grace, when His devotees
bid farewell, to the bodies wherein they dwell.

Devotees of all religions go to Him with great faith and are benefited. I have, however, found that the number of Muslims going to Him at Prashanthi Nilayam and Whitefield or elsewhere is very small, almost negligible, although in His previous Incarnation, Shirdi Sai Baba (who dressed like a Muslim and lived in a mosque) had a large number of Muslim devotees. The Muslims of India have so far not been able to recognize His Godhood, although many African Muslims are staunch believers.

Baba has very clearly declared that all religions, all names of God used by men, and all people irrespective of their sex, nationality, religion, caste, class or cultural affiliations are His, and that He has not come to this world to start any new religious cult, or favour any particular religion, community, nation, or His own home, village or State.

Sai Baba's social works are many. He has embarked upon the most crucial task of the educational reconstruction and moral regeneration of India. He has established a Post Graduate Girls College at Anantapur (some miles from Prashanti Nilayam) a few years back. He has started two girls' colleges at Jaipur and Bhopal. A boys college has been started by Him in His Brindavanam ashram. There are plans to start atleast one Sai College in each state of India. The purpose of these colleges is not to impart parochial or bigoted teachings but to develop the young in the best traditions of Indian culture and spirituality synthesing this with the demands of today.

I have had a chance to meet some teachers and students of these colleges run by the Shri Sathya Sai Trust, which is a private management. There is no exploitation or underpaying of teachers and no suppression or rude dealing meted out to students. The culture of mediocrity does not prevail there. Baba is ever watching, directing, guiding, even the minute academic and administrative aspects of these modern Gurukuls started by Him. I have heard from some students and other visitors to Baba's two ashrams that sometimes Baba Himself sits in the admission committee of the Sai College at Brindavanam. He personally talks to each and every student and teacher, and corrects them by His miracles and personal guidance with affection as well as firmness.

A Veda Pathshala has for several years been functioning in the Prashanti Nilayam, where the Vedas and other Sanskrit scriptures are taught to select students. Baba has organised Summer Courses on spirituality and Indian culture since 1972 for the benefit of college students and foreigners. Baba delivers His Divine Discourse every evening in such courses which are full of deep spiritual knowledge communicated in a very lively, simple, and captivating manner. He invites distinguished professors, vice-chancellors, High Court judges, poets, philosophers, sociologists, and spiritually awakened people from all walks of life, to deliver these lectures.

I have been impressed by three special features of these gyan yagyan. Firstly, boarding and lodging are free for students and teachers. Secondly, Baba looks after the students most lovingly, moving among them during meal-time, talking, joking and advising them in a most dignified manner; and thirdly, Baba Himself has great respect and affection for the visiting lecturers.

Baba has been responsible for starting Bal Vikas classes at thousands of places in India, where children are taught the essentials of good conduct, spirituality, and Indian culture. Dr T.R. Kulkarni, Reader in the Department of Applied Psychology, Bombay University, has conducted a serious experimental research study "Psychological Evaluation of Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Centres, Bombay." In his Interim Report, published in May 1975, he has presented his conclusions that "the hypothesis that 'Spiritual Training' may be effective in building up a good character seems acceptable. . . . The second question, whether the Bal Vikas training programme is consistent with the general principles of learning is definitely in the affirmative," and thirdly, "the Bal Vikas Centres have succeeded to a considerable extent in achieving their objective."

Sai Baba is very keen to improve teaching standards and is planning to run a course to train teachers. Unlike many other godmen in India and elsewhere, who shun any objective, critical and open examination or assessment of their ashrams, educational, and other social and religious institutions, Baba encourages objective researchers to examine, experiment, analyze and then form their conclusions about His activities.

Baba organizes many festivals in His ashram, most important of which are Guru Poornima, Baba's Birthday, Dasara, Diwali, Onam, New Year's Day, Ram Navami, and Shiva Ratri. He feeds hundreds of beggars and distributes clothes to them, gives Divine discourses, personal interviews to the devotees, distributes vibhuti to thousands of devotees personally by His own Hand for several hours, and allows them to do Padamaskaram (Saluating Him by touching His Divine Feet).

Baba lays great emphasis on social service. He has revived throughout India the ancient Indian institution of itinerant singing of God's glory in the early morning, Nagar Sankirtan. Sai bhajans have become popular all over the world wherever His followers live. Thursday is the special day for Sai worship. Sai bhajan sessions can be attended by anybody. Baba has formed strict rules for the conducting of bhajans, dealing with Sai devotees, and dealing sternly with those who exploit Baba's name for seeking undesirable selfish personal favours.

Baba has rightly made this self-assessment of His role as the great Incarnation of God: "No avatar has done this before—going to the masses, counselling them, uplifting them, directing them along the path of Truth, Duty, Peace and Love."

SAI BABA'S CHARISMA

Sai Baba's personality is truly charismatic. He is an ideal example of a cultured person. He likes peaceful, clean and pious places. He is very gentle and graceful in speech and in behaviour. His simplicity has impressed everyone. He eats the food of the poorest of this land, without any milk, curd, butter or ghee and has no taste for sweets. Whenever He is at Prashanti Nilayam, His elder sister, a widow and an ardent devotee, brings a small tiffin carrier of ordinary South Indian food, and Baba takes just a little of it.

He sits and sleeps on the same mattress at Prashanti Nilayam. He has not been seen wearing any ornament, shoes, head-dress, or clothes other than His long chola and dhoti. What distinguishes Him from other godmen and great saints of the modern world is that while they accept money, flowers, and worldly things from their followers, and some even charge fantastic fees for granting interviews and teaching Yoga or foretelling the future, Baba is always giving rather than receiving. At most, devotees and visitors are allowed to offer incense, broken unripe coconuts and flowers at the big statue of Ganeshji installed just in front of the main entrance of Prashanti Nilayam. Very rarely does Baba accept flowers or garlands or betel from devotees, but instantly. He lovingly throws them onto other devotees.

Professor Kasturi has very truly written, without the least exaggeration, that Baba "is the most tireless worker at the Nilayam, designing, arranging and supervising every little act that conduces to the proper functioning of its various world-wide activities." Nothing is done there or in other places where organisations function in His Name,without His express permission and blessings.

One of Baba's greatest qualities is that He does not insist on observing any diehard rituals. One can worship Sai by following any mode of worship, by uttering the name of any God, anywhere, at any time, and preferably in the shrine or a little corner of one's own house rather than in any temple. None has to change his religion in order to believe in or worship Sai Baba. No costly prashads, bhandaras (mass feasting), gifts to Brahmins, priests or any intermediaries are required. There are no rules debarring women, lower castes and tribes, or foreigners from entering His ashram whose gates are open for all people. As a matter of fact, Baba has repeatedly told His followers:

> You must have noticed that I do not speak about Sai in My discourses, nor do I sing of Sai during the *bhajan* with which I usually conclude My discourses . . . . I do not want the impression to gain round that I desire this name and this form to be publicised. I have not come to set afoot a new cult, I do-not want people to be mislead on this point. I affirm that this Sai form is the form of all the various names that man uses for the adoration of the Divine. So, I am teaching that no distinction should be made between the name—Rama, Krishna, Ishwara, Sai—for they are all My names.

EPILOGUE

In spite of the fact that Baba's mission is crystal clear, there are many ignorant people who try to raise confusion by anti Sai propaganda. They raise such points as: Why does Baba wear silk or terene instead of cotton? Why does He usually stay in the houses of rich people? Why does He not allow every visitor to come straight to His interview room and receive His vibhuti, gifts, cures and all sorts of boons since all men are equal? Why does He not remove poverty, corruption, exploitation, disease and suffering? Why does He perform miracles? How is the expenditure of the various activities of His ashrams and colleges etc. met by Him? Why should we treat Him as God?

Neither I nor any Sai devotee is expected, or is competent, to act as an advocate of Sai Baba. Baba has Himself dwelt on all these points very clearly in His discourses and He has given everybody the fullest freedom and opportunity and has thrown a challenging situation to all the scientists of the world to use their intellect and all their methods of objective scientific inquiry to unravel the truth about Him and His activities. Baba's replies to such points of criticism as are mentioned above are briefly the following.

As to His wearing silk, Baba says, "Does putting on rags confer any glory or special status of spirituality on anyone?" In Paramhansa Yoganand's well known book, *Autobiography of a Yogi*. I have read that generally great incarnations, yogis, and godmen wear silk to contain the unique current of spirituality in their bodies.

Baba goes to the houses of earnest devotees—whether they are rich or poor. Good karmas of certain people in their past lives enable them to have the privilege of welcoming Baba in their homes. While on tour, He stays in the houses of either Presidents or officials of Sai Seva Dal, or in sufficiently large houses, so that the thousands of people who come to see and meet Him may find space to stand or sit.

He gives darshan to all freely. He selects many persons (ten to thirty persons generally) almost everyday from amongst the crowd of thousands of people ever present before Him, whether He is in any of His ashrams or on a visit to any place. He comes out to give His darshan many times a day, right from 6 a.m. till 8.30 or 9 p.m. wherever He is. The people selected for private interview are picked up by Him alone, through no intermediaries or recommendations whatsoever, depending upon the merits earned by them by their past karmas, as well as His express Divine will to ameliorate their suffering and bless them. He knows the past, present, and future fate of everyone.

Baba has advised us not to attach any great importance to the interviews granted by Him to people. As omnipresent and omnipotent God, He is ever present, everywhere, in every heart. One must claim His Grace by worship and serving men without selfish motives. Then He can manifest Himself in the houses of such real followers wherever they are located in the world.

The concept of equality of men does not work in spiritual matter, as Baba has stated: "The cry of equality now being used as slogan is a vain and meaningless cry; for how can man, inheriting a multiplicity of impulses, skills, qualities, tendencies, attitudes, and even diseases from his ancestors and from his own history be all of the same type?" It is indeed impossible for any human being (after all Baba is also human) to grant interviews to each and every person out of the crowd of several thousands, impatient to meet Him every day.

The improvement of the world is a slow process. Already there are millions of Sai devotees all over the world, who have started introspecting and improving their personal, family and community lives, according to the humanistic or universal religious and spiritual teachings of Baba. Their number is growing bigger and bigger every day. The foundation of the Sai era of peace, duty, truth and love has already been laid. Baba's assurance to us is that by the time He leaves His present Body, humanity will have very considerably improved in spiritual and social matters. Judging from the success of the efforts of Sai Baba so far, this claim seems to be very promising and true. Improvement of the world or human societies can come only with every individual becoming peaceful, true, nonviolent and godfearing, and spreading the concentric waves of these high ideals worthy of humanity.

Sai Baba does not perform miracles just to show off His powers or threaten us. They are just part of the nature of His kind-hearted, witty, and loving Divine Personality. They are meant to make devotees feel joyful, forget miseries, and encourage or motivate them to tread on the path of spirituality. Baba does not want these miracles to be publicised by devotees. Of course, a number of those people who have yet not had the joy of witnessing these miracles sometimes become jealous and raise doubts or criticisms out of ignorance.

The expenditure of the ashrams and Sai Colleges, summer courses, etc. is met out of the collections of voluntary donations of rich people to the Central Sri Sathya Sai Trust. Wealthy people who have become followers of Baba are ever prepared to donate or sacrifice all or a part of their wealth at the slightest prompting of Sai Baba in their conscience.

The common man is not asked to make donations to Baba or His Trust. If anybody wants to donate, there is no need for that person to contribute through anybody else, or approach Baba; he can deposit money in the Central Shri Sathya Sai Trust account with any branch of Canara Bank, and obtain a receipt from the bank in case he wishes to show it to Income Tax authorities. No entry fee for visiting His ashrams or fee for granting interview, gifts or charities are taken by Him or anybody else in His name. *Sanatan Sarathi* , the official journal of His ashram, has issued this warning for the attention of Sai devotees and people throughout the world:

> Readers are informed that a new class of cheats have emerged recently, who try to collect donations from unwary devotees, with the help of letters written under forged signatures of persons like Sri N. Kasturi, connected with the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, either at the Prasanthi Nilayam or in the several states of India.... Readers are requested to be vigilant with such characters and apprehend them, when they present themselves.

The expenditure in the ashram and other Sai institutions is done very thriftily since Sai Baba's ever-watchful eyes look on everyone and all are afraid of Him, and secondly, almost every service or work is done in the ashram by devotees as part of their devotion to the Lord voluntarily and gladly. Thousands of volunteers are ever forthcoming to handle the crowds and the canteen, water, cleanliness, and booksale services during the festivals in the ashrams or elsewhere.

Is Baba really a God? To this often-raised doubt, Baba has given a classic and most befitting reply in such statements:

> You have not heard Me fully; I say I am God; I say also that you are God. The only difference is that I know that you and I are God and you do not know it.
>
> ...Do not worry about My Advent; worry about your own future.
>
> Even if all the fourteen worlds unite against Me, the work for which I have come will not suffer a bit; even if earth and heaven combine, My Truth will remain unshaken.

We would like to conclude this profile of Baba by reproducing a rare song which Baba used to sing in Telgu when He was young:

That *Nand Bala* [Krishna] has come down today as *Ananda Bala* to identify His kith and kin,
That Rama Chandra has come down today as *Aaram Chandra* [Abode of Happiness] to identify His servants,
That Isha [Iswara, God] has come down today as *Bal Sesha* to play with the group of His playmates,
That Maha Vishnu has come down as *Mahi Vishnu* [Vishnu or Master of earth, as Kshatriya] to assume and employ His weapons.
Paramatma [God] is the manipulator of this play of puppets,
He stands on the arena of life making the puppets dance as He pleases,
It is for you only to see and enjoy the play, describe it ali ttle, derive pleasure, but you can never fully comprehend it!

SECTION TWO—SAI BABA ON HIMSELF

2. WHY I INCARNATE

SHRI SATHYA SAI BABA

"For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil-doers and for establishing righteousness on a firm footing, I incarnate from age to age." Whenever ashanti or disharmony overwhelms the world, the Lord will incarnate in human form to establish the modes of earning prashanthi or peace and to re-educate the human community in the paths of peace.

At the present time, strife and discord have robbed peace and unity from the family, the school, the community, the society, villages, the cities and the state. The arrival of the Lord is also anxiously awaited by saints and sages. Sadhus prayed and I have come. My main tasks are fostering of the Vedas and fostering of the devotees. Your virtue, your self-control, your detachment, your faith, your steadfastness, these are the signs by which people read of my glory.

You can lay claim to be My devotee only when you have placed yourself in My hands fully and completely with no trace of ego. You can enjoy the bliss through the experience the avatar confers. The avatar behaves in a human way so that mankind can feel kinship, but rises into his superhuman heights so that mankind can aspire to reach the heights and through that aspiration can actually reach Him.

Realizing the Lord within you as the motivator is the task for which He comes in human form. Avatars like Rama and Krishna had to kill one or more individuals who could be identified as enemies of the dharmic way of life and thus restore the practice of virtue. But now there is no one fully good. And so, who deserves the protection of God? All are tainted by wickedness, and so who will survive, if the avatar decides to uproot? Therefore, I have come to correct the 'budhi'—the intelligence by various means. I have to counsel, help, command, condemn and stand by as a friend and well-wisher to all, so that they may give up evil propensities and recognising the straight path, tread it and reach the goal. I have to reveal to the people the worth of the Vedas, the Shastras and other Spiritual texts, which lay down the norms. If you accept Me and say yes, I too respond and say yes, yes, yes. If you deny and say no, I also echo no. Come, examine, experience, have faith. That is the method of utilizing Me.

I do not mention about Sai Baba in any of My discourses. Though I bear the name as avatar of Sai Baba, I do not appreciate in the least the distinction between the various appearances of God—Sai, Rama, Krishna etc. I do not proclaim that this is more important or that the other is less important. Continue your worship of your chosen God along the lines already familiar to you. Then you will find that you are coming nearer and nearer to Me; for all names are Mine and all forms are Mine. There is no need to change your chosen God and adopt a new one when you have seen Me and heard Me.

Every step in the career of the avatar is pre-determined. Rama came to feed the roots of Satya or truth and Dharma or righteousness. Krishna came to foster Shanti—peace and Prema—love. Now all these four are in danger of being dried up. That is why the present avatar has come. The Dharma, that has fled to forests, has to be led back into the villages and towns. The anti-dharma, that is ruining the villages and towns has to be driven into the jungle.

I have come to give you the key of the treasure of Ananda or bliss, to tell you how to tap that spring; for you have forgotten the way to blessedness. If you waste this chance of saving yourselves, it is just your fate. You have come to get from Me tinsels and trash, the petty little cures and promotions, worldly joy and comforts. Very few of you desire to get from Me the thing I have come to give you, namely, liberation itself. Even among these few those who stick to the path of Sadhana or spiritual practice and succeed, are a handful.

Your worldly intelligence cannot fathom the ways of God. He cannot be recognised by mere cleverness or intelligence. You may benefit from God, but you cannot explain Him. Your explanations are merely guesses, attempts to cloak your ignorance in pompous expressions. Bring something into your daily practice as evidence of your having known that secret of the higher life from Me. Show that you have greater brotherliness; speak with more sweetness and self-control. Bear defeat as well as victory with calm resignation.

I am always aware of the future, the past as well as the present of every one of you. So, I am not so moved by mercy. Since I know the past, the background, the reaction is different. It is your consequence of evil deliberately done in the previous birth and so I allow your suffering to continue; often modified by some little compensation. I do not cause either joy or grief; you are the designer of both these chains that bind you. I am Anandaswarupa. Come, take Ananda from Me; dwell on that Ananda or bliss and be full of Shanti or peace.

My acts are the foundations on which I am building my work—the task for which I have come. All the miraculous acts which you observe are to be interpreted so. The foundation for a dam requires righteous materials; without these it will not last and hold back the waters. When the Lord is incarnated, He has to be used in various ways by man for his uplift.

The Lord has no intention to publicise Himself. I do not need publicity, nor does any other avatar of the Lord. What are your daring to publicise—Me? What do you know about

Me? You speak one thing about Me today and another tomorrow. Your faith has not become unshakable. You praise Me when things go well and blame Me when things go wrong. When you start publicity you descend to the level of all those who compete in collecting plenty by decrying others and extolling themselves. Where money is calculated, garnered or exhibited to demonstrate one's achievements, I will not be present. I come only where sincerity and faith and surrender are valued; only inferior minds will revel in publicity and self-aggrandisement. These have no relevance in the case of avatars; they need no advertisement.

The establishment of dharma, righteousness—that is My aim. The teachings of dharma; the spread of dharma—that is My object. These miracles, as you call them, are just a few means towards that end. Some of you remark that Ramakrishna Paramhansa has said that the siddhis or yogic powers are obstructions in the path of the sadhana. Yes, siddhis may lead the sadhaka or the spiritual aspirant astray. Without being involved in them he has to keep straight on or his ego will bring him down to the evil—the temptation of demonstrating his yogic powers. This is a correct advice which every aspirant should heed. But mistake lies in equating Me with the sadhaka like the one whom Ramakrishna wanted to help, guide and warn. These siddhis or yogic powers are just in the nature of the avatar. The creation of peace with intent to protect and give joy, is spontaneous and lasting. Creation, preservation, and dissolution can be accomplished only by the Almighty. No one else can. Cynics carp without knowledge.

They who learn the Shashtras or scriptures or they who cultivate direct experience—can understand Me. Your innate laziness prevents you from the spiritual exercise necessary to discover the nature of God. This laziness should go. It has to be driven out of man's nature, in whatever shape it appears. That is My mission. My task is not merely to cure and console and remove individual misery. But it is something far more important. The removal of misery and distress is incidental to My mission. My main task is the re-establishment of Vedas and Shashtras and revealing the knowledge about them to all people. This task will succeed. It will not be limited. It will not be slowed down. When the Lord decides and wills, His Divine will cannot be hindered.

You must have heard people say that Mine is all magic, but the manifestation of divine power must not be interpreted in terms of magic. Magicians play their tricks for earning their maintenance, worldly fame and wealth. They are based on falsehood and they thrive on deceit. But this Body can never stoop to such low level. This Body has come through the Lord's resolve to come. That resolve is intended to uphold the Satya or truth. Divine resolve is always true resolve. Remember, there is nothing that Divine power cannot accomplish. It can transmute earth into sky and sky into earth. To doubt this, is to prove that you are too weak to grasp great things and grandeur of the universe.

I have come to instruct all in the essence of the Vedas; to shower on all this precious gift, to protect Sanatana Dharma,—the ancient wisdom, and preserve it. My mission is to spread happiness and so I am always ready to come among you, not once but twice or thrice, as often as you want Me.

Many of you probably think that since people from all parts of India, even from foreign countries come to Puttaparthi, they must be pouring their contributions into the coffers of the Nilayam. But let Me declare the truth. I do not take anything from any one except their love and devotion. This has been My consistent practice for the last many years. People, who come here, are giving Me just the wealth of faith, devotion and love. That is all.

Many of you come to Me with problems of help and mental worry of some sort or the other. They are mere baits by which you have been brought here, but the main purpose is that you may have the grace and strengthen your faith in the Divine. Problems and worries are really to be welcomed as they teach you the lesson of humility and reverence. Running after external things produces all this discontent. That type of desire has no end. Once you become a slave to the sense, they will not leave hold until your death. It is an unquenchable thirst. But I call you to Me and even grant worldly boons, so that you may turn Godward. No avatar has done like this before—going among the masses, counselling them, guiding them, consoling them, uplifting them, directing them along the path of Satya, Dharama, Shanti, and Prema.

My activities and movements will never be altered whoever may pass whatever opinion on them. I shall not modify My plans for dharmasthapna—the establishment of righteousness, My discourses, or My movements. I have stuck to this determination for many years and I am engaged in the task of which I have come, i.e. to inculcate faith in the path of prashanti. I shall not stop, nor retract a step. Not even the biggest scientist can understand Me by means of his laboratory knowledge. I am always full of bliss, whatever may happen. Nothing can come in the way of My smile. That is why I am able to impart joy to you and make your burden lighter.

I never exult when I am extolled nor shrink when I am reviled. Few have realised My purpose and significance, but I am not worried when things that are not in Me are attributed to Me. Why should I worry? When things that are in Me are mentioned, why should I exult? For Me it is always yes, yes, yes. If you give up and surrender to the Lord, He will guard you and guide you. The Lord has come just for this very task. He is declaring that He will do so and that is the very task that brought Him here.

I know the agitations of your heart and its aspirations, but you do not know My heart. I react to the pain that you undergo and to the joy that you feel, for I am in your heart. I am the dweller in the temple of every heart. Do not lose contact and company, for it is only when the lump of coal is in contact with the live ember that it can also become live ember. Cultivate nearness with Me in the heart and you will be rewarded. Then you too will acquire a fraction of the supreme love. This is a great chance. Be confident that you all will be liberated. Know that you are saved. Many hesitate to believe that things will improve; that life will be happy for all and full of joy, and that the golden age will recur. Let Me assure you that this Dharmaswarupa—this Divine body—has not come in vain. It will succeed in warding off the crisis that has come upon humanity.

3. WHO IS SAI

SHRI SATHYA SAI BABA

God is inscrutable. He cannot be realized in the outer objective world; He is in the very heart of every being. Gemstones have to be sought deep underground; they do not float in mid-air. Seek God in the depths of your self, not in the tantalising, kaleidoscopic Nature. The body is granted to you for this high purpose, but you are now misusing it, like the person who cooked his daily food in the gem-studded gold vase that came into his hands as an heirloom.

Man extols God as omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, but he ignores His Presence in Himself! Of course, many venture to describe the attributes of God and proclaim Him to be such and such, but these are but their own guesses and the reflections of their own predilections and preferences.

Who can affirm that God is this or thus? Who can affirm that God is not of this form or with this attribute? Each one can acquire from the vast expanse of the ocean only as much as can be contained in the vessel he carries to its shore. From that quantity, they can grasp but little of that immensity.

Each religion defines God within the limits it demarcates and then claims to have grasped Him. Like the seven blind men who spoke of the elephant as a pillar, a fan, a rope or a wall, because they contacted but a part and could not comprehend the entire animal, so too, religions speak of a part and assert that their vision is full and total.

Each religion forgets that God is all forms and all names, all attributes and all assertions. The Religion of Humanity is the sum and substance of all these partial faiths, for there is only one religion and that is the Religion of Love. The various limbs of the elephant that seemed separate and distinct to the eyeless seekers of its truth were all fostered and activated by one single steam of blood; the various religions and faiths that feel separate and distinct are all fostered by a single stream of love.

The optical sense cannot visualize the Truth. It gives only false and barren information. For example, there are many who observe My actions and start declaring that My nature is such and such. They are unable to gauge the sanctity, the majesty and the eternal reality that is Me. The power of Sai is limitless; it manifests forever. All forms of "power" are resident in this Sai palm.

But, those who profess to have understood Me, the scholars, the yogis, the pundits, the jnanis, all of them are aware only of the least important, the casual external manifestation of an infinitesimal part of that power, namely, the "miracles"! They have not desired to contact the source of all power and all wisdom. They are satisfied when they secure a chance to exhibit their book-learning and parade their scholarship in Vedic lore, not realizing that the Person from whom the Vedas emanated is in their midst, for their sake.

This has been the case in all ages. People may be very near (physically) to the avatar, but they live out their lives unaware of their fortune, but exaggerate the role of miracles, which are as trivial when compared to My glory and majesty, as a mosquito is in size and strength to the elephant upon which it squats. Therefore, when you speak about these "miracles," I laugh within Myself out of pity, that you allow yourself so easily to lose the precious awareness of My reality.

My power is immeasurable. My truth is inexplicable, unfathomable. I am announcing this about Me, for the need has arisen. But what I am doing now is only the gift of a "visiting card." Let Me tell you that emphatic declarations of the truth by avatars were made so clearly and so unmistakeably only by Krishna. In spite of the declaration, you will notice in the career of the same Krishna that He underwent defeat in His efforts and endeavours on a few occasions, though you must also note that those defeats too were part of the drama which He had planned and which He Himself directed.

When many kings pleaded with Him to avert the war with the Kauravas, He confessed that His Mission to the Kaurava court for ensuring peace had "failed"! But He had not willed that it should succeed. He had decided that the war would be waged. His Mission was intended to punish the greed and iniquity of the Kauravas and to condemn them before the whole world.

But I must tell you, that during this Sai Avatar, there is no place for even such "drama" with scenes of failures and defeats! What I will, must take place; what I plan must succeed, I am Truth, and Truth has no need to hesitate, or fear, or bend.

"Willing" is superfluous for Me. For My Grace is ever available to devotees who have steady love and faith. Since I move among them, talking and singing, even intellectuals are unable to grasp My truth, My power, My glory, or My real task as avatar. I can solve any problem however knotty. I am beyond the reach of the most intensive inquiry and the most meticulous measurement. Only those who have recognised My love and experienced that love can assert that they have glimpsed My reality. For, the path of love is the Royal road that leads mankind to Me.

Do not attempt to know Me through the external eyes. When you go to a temple and stand before the image of God, you pray with closed eyes, don't you? Why? Because you feel that the inner eye of wisdom alone can reveal Him to you. Therefore, do not crave from Me trivial material objects, but crave for Me, and you will be rewarded. Not that you should not receive whatever objects I give as sign of Grace out of the fulness of love.

I shall tell you why I give those rings, talismans, rosaries etc. It is to mark the bond between Me and those to whom they are given. When calamity befalls them, the article comes to Me in a flash taking from Me the remedial Grace of protection. That grace is available to all who call on Me in any name or form, not merely to those who wear these gifts. Love is the bond that wins Grace.

Consider the meaning of the name, Sai Baba. *Sa* means "Divine"; *ai* or *ayi* means mother and *Baba* means father. The name indicates the Divine Mother and Father, just as *Sambasiva* also means the Divine Mother and Father (Samba Siva). Your physical parents might cultivate love with a dose of selfishness. But this Sai "Mother and Father" showers affection or reprimands, only for leading you towards victory in the struggle for self-realization.

For this Sai has come in order to achieve the supreme task of uniting as one family the entire mankind, through the bond of brotherhood, of affirming and illumining the atmic reality of each being in order to reveal the divine which is the basis on which the entire cosmos rests, and of instructing all to recognize the common divine heritage that binds man to man, so that man can rid himself of the animal, and rise into the divinity which is his goal.

I am the embodiment of love; love is My instrument. There is no creature without Love; the lowest loves itself, at least. And there are no atheists, though some might dislike Him or refuse Him, as malarial patients dislike sweets or diabetic patients refuse to have anything to do with sweets! Those who preen themselves as atheists will one day, when their illness is gone, relish God and revere Him.

I had to tell you so much about My Truth, for I desire that you should contemplate on this and derive joy therefrom, so that you may be inspired to observe the disciplines laid down and progress towards the goal of self-realization, the realization of the Sai that shines in your hearts.

4. SOCIAL LIFE AND ATMIC SADHANA

SHRI SATHYA SAI BABA

What has sociology or the social sciences to do with the science of the spirit or the inquiry into the human spirit? This is a question that is commonly raised. So too, many ask: What has the spiritual student and sadhaka to do with society and its problems. It must be said that both these attitudes are wrong.

No society can find its fulfilment, no social ideal can fructify without the blossoming of the spirit of man. Mankind cannot realize the divinity whose expression it is, without careful and constant attention being paid to the cultivation of the spirit.How else can this divinity express itself than in and through individuals? We can apprehend only the world, this moving, inconstant, fantasia; we cannot see or hear, smell, taste, or touch the Director of the Fantasia, God. In the same manner, we can apprehend the individual but not the entity named society. For society is no separate, distinct complex formed out of elemental components. Society is the divine proliferation produced by the Will Supreme.

Man is mortal; dust he is and to dust he returns. But in him there shines the atma, as a spark of the immortal flame. This is not a term of flattery invented by the Vedantists. The atma is the source, the sustenance of every being and every organization of beings. It is the one and only source, substance and sustenance. The atma is God; the particular is the universal, no less. Therefore, recognize in each being, in each man, a brother, the child of God, and ignore all limiting thoughts and prejudices based on status, colour, class, nativity, and caste. Sai is ever engaged in warning you and guiding you so that you may think, speak, and act in this attitude of love.

Society cannot justify itself by planning to divide the spoils gained out of Nature either in equal shares or unequal shares. The consummation that must inspire society has to be the establishment and elaboration, in every social act and resolution, of the knowledge of the one universal atma and the bliss that knowledge confers. Sai does not direct, "The atma has no death; therefore, kill the physical sheaths, the bodies." No, Sai does not encourage wars. Sai directs you to recognize the atma as your closest kin, closer than the members of your family, your blood-relations and your dearest descendents. When this is done, you will never more stray from the path of right, which alone can maintain that kinship.

Familial attachment operates even against the performance of one's legitimate duties. But attachment to the Divine fills that duty with a new dedication which ensures both joy and success. It activates man as nothing else can; it confers on him during the process of doing his duty the highest wisdom. Hence the advice: Do not enter the objective world (prakriti) in the hope of realizing the atma; enter the objective world, after becoming aware of the atma, for then you see nature in a new light and your very life becomes a long festival of love.

There are many who use their scholarship and intelligence, even Vedic scholarship, in dreary debate and competitive display. They are enamoured of their petty triumphs. They declare that society is an arena for winning such triumphs. But Sai calls on you to seek and strengthen another type of society, where there is no room for such trivial desires.

Disputive Vedic scholars crave for the fruits of their endeavours and efforts through ritual. Nature does not crave, so the clouds bring rain, as a homage to God who is their Lord, but they attribute it to the efficacy of their rites and use it to inflate their ego. They play about among the far-spreading branches of the tree of desire. They are entangled in the coils of the three "ropes" —

the Tamasic, the Rajasic, and the Satvic.

You have to go beyond the three ropes, the three bonds. You have to be, ever, in the unchanging eternal truth. You must be established in the one, as the One, with no trace or taste of Two. Earning and garnering should not interest you; you must not be caught in the pursuit of yoga and kshema, for you are full already and have no wants.

The ideal of a high standard of life, instead of a high level of living has played havoc with human society. A high level of living consists on morality, humility, detachment, compassion, so the competitive greed for luxury and conspicuous consumption receives no encouragement and will be destroyed. Now, man is the slave of his desires; he finds himself helpless to conquer the thirst for pleasure and luxury; he is too weak to keep his nature under control; he does not know how to arouse the Divine Consciousness that is latent in him.

Mere moral practices or instruction cannot help you to achieve this. It can be done only by spiritual sadhana, for it is a basic transformation. It involves the elimination of the mind, which is the obstacle in the path. Grace of God, if invoked and won, can endow you with the power. And grace is available within you, awaiting the call.

Man must give up reliance on the vagaries of the mind. He must act ever in the consciousness of his innate divinity. When that is done, his three-fold nature (composed of the gunas—tamasic, rajasic, and satvic) will automatically express itself through only holy channels. That is the genuine manifestation.

Another point. The argument may be raised: If one has to give up the desire for comfort, luxury and pleasure, why should one be embroiled in society? This presupposes the belief that society is justified only by the provision of such worldly joys. But what kind of society can one build on slender foundations? If built, it can be a society only in name. It will not be bound by mutual love and cooperation. The strong will suppress the weak. Social relations will be marred by discontent. Even when attempts are made to divide the resources of Nature equally among all, the cordiality will be only on the surface. It will not be spontaneous. We can limit the resources available, but we cannot limit greed, desire, and craving. Desire involves seeking beyond the limits of possibility.

What has to be done is to pluck out desire by the roots. Man must give up the desire for objective pleasure, based on the illusion that the World is many, manifold, multi-coloured etc. and not on the truth that the world, nature, all creation, is One. When one is conscious only of the one, who desires which? What can be acquired and enjoyed by the second person? The atmic vision destroys the desire for objective joys, for there is no object distinct from the subject.

This is the true function of society — to enable every member to realize this atmic vision. The men and women bound by mutual interests in a society are not merely families, castes, classes, groups, or kinsmen and kinswomen; they are one atma. They are knit by the closest of family ties; not only the one society to which they feel they are bound, all mankind is one. "Vasudhaiva kutumbakam," as the Shastras declare; the whole world is one family. This unity must be experienced by everyone.

Natural resources and wealth are now being used for the boosting of one's ego. But when the atmic unity is realized, they will promote the new way of life through love. What is now "mercy," or legally enforced mutual "help" will then be transformed into "divine love" that can effectively purify the recipient and the giver. This consummation is beyond the region of common politics, ethics, or economics. They cannot transform the receiver and thrill the giver, however much they attempt to equalize. They do not have the appeal and they have no power to sustain. The equality they establish will be haunted by a shadow, the shadow of the ego. This shadow can disappear only when identity as One is known and felt.

It may be said that not all desires are wrong; the rajasic ones which harm and exploit others can be condemned; but why renounce satvic desire? But, desire is desire, though the object may be beneficial and pure. The fruit of effort, the mind that seeks it, the vitality that activates the mind, life itself—every one of these has to be turned towards the Lord, with devotion born out of the vision of the One.

Those who argue that the spiritual path is for the individual only, and that society should not be involved in it are committing a great mistake. It is like insisting that there should be light inside the house, and saying that it does not matter if there is darkness outside. Devotion towards God goes ill with hatred towards fellowmen. Fellowmen and the world must be seen ever in the mirror of Sat-Chit-Ananda. Kinship based on this recognition will alone last. That is the Sai kinship. When you deepen that kinship, the true presence, the constant presence of Sathya Sai will be yours. Do not be led away by your fancies into the jungle of words and feelings. Be firm, true to your innermost nature.

Good and evil are based on the reaction of individuals; they are not inherent in things or events. Vedanta or atheism is accepted or rejected, when one likes or dislikes it. They do not depend on logical acceptance or rejection. Only experience can establish their validity. Who can delineate Godhood as thus and thus? Those who do are indulging in a futile exercise, they have no authority for declaring it. If they claim the right, they are but conceited people relying on their limited intellects.

Divinity is fully immanent in every one, it is patent for the eyes that can see clearly and deeply. Whoever denies this is only cheating himself of his reality. He cannot dismiss It by denial, either from himself or others.

The conclusion, therefore, is inevitable, that it is the duty of men to see in society the expression of Divinity, and to use all their skill and effort to promote the welfare and prosperity of Society. Man must cultivate this expansive feeling, this incisive thinking, and this intuitive vision. Without these three, man is but an inert being; he loses his title to be called human.

The spirit of renuncitation, adherence to virtue, the eagerness to cooperate, the sense of kinship — these are the characteristic signs of man. Life which considers these as encumbrances cannot be valued as "life."

The brotherhood of man can be translated into life only on the basis of the atmic vision. All men thirst for peace, happiness, and bliss. They are the precious heritage which is their right for they are God's treasure. They can be earned only by recognising the bond that knits man to man. All men are of one lineage, they are of divine lineage.

All men are cells in the one divine organism, in the divine body. That should be your faith, your fortune, your fort, your fullness. Awareness of this alone gives you the right to call yourself a man. Learn to live as men. This is the sadhana. This is the message of Sai.

SECTION THREE—VARIOUS FACETS OF SAI BABA'S CHALLENGE

5. THE SAI BABA MOVEMENT—

Approaches to the Study of Indian Saints

DR CHARLES S. J. WHITE

The time has long since passed when scholars of Indian religion should have begun to consider seriously the nature of Indian sainthood and more particularly the so-called "living saints." As it is, the knowledgeable reader has very little choice of published material upon which to base his judgments. For many of the living saints there is a fairly extensive body of apologetic writing. In the nature of primary sources such works are invaluable but remain unanalyzed. There are also publications available in the occult market; but there the motives of the writers differ from those of scholarly inquiry in many cases, however interesting their contributions may be in their own right.

Analytical works on modern Hinduism and its saint leadership are negligible in number. Of course, we fare rather better when it comes to the literary saints of the middle ages in various parts of the land and in different traditions. But regarding them, there is often little biographical material that one can be certain of, while the traditions concerning their lives, teachings and poetry achieve the same kind of stylization that one notices in rows of identical icons in a temple.

Regarding the living saints, what is presently most necessary is that there should be thorough reporting of their behaviour, preferably from first hand observation, and an objective clarification of their biographies according to certain motifs and structures. The specifically religious nature of their activities must also be investigated. In respect to that, what follows is the development of a study begun several years ago of some living saints in the Poona and Bangalore regions who together constitute a homogeneous group that I have called the Sai Baba Movement.

The author will attempt in this paper to present sufficient data on these saints, including whatever relates to their interconnections so that we have some basis on which to make a claim, however limited in scope, that we can "understand" them. In due course, we shall also attempt to sort out the more general methodological criteria which, on the basis of our study, appear necessary for the task of interpretation and also to point out the difficulties which certain judgments impose upon the satisfaction of our desire to understand.

CONSTRUCTION

To begin with let me say that I do not think it is feasible here to sum up everything that can be known regarding the Sai Baba Movement. It is, nevertheless, possible to begin to point out lines of approach to the question of these contemporary religious figures. As with so much else in Indian religion the origins are lost in antiquity but preserved in the flesh and blood of the living cult, even if to a degree unselfconsciously. From what I have been able to discover on the subject it appears to me that scholars would support the view that present day saintly figures in Hinduism belong to the traditions of guru, ascetic, avatar, and saint—in fact, that they are a blending of all: hence it will be worthwhile to glance at the nature of the opinions about these four venerable religious roles before proceeding further.

Guru. Professor Gonda asserts that the term guru in Sanskrit, which has the meaning "heavy or weighty," may offer, "...an illustration of the widespread belief that mighty, divine or holy persons are held to be characterized by an uncommon weight."[1] But it is easy to move from this adjectival sense to the substantive one in reference to the person whose knowledge and function make him a weighty person in prestige and influence.

Atharva Veda (3, 1, 13) outlines the traditional role of the guru as spiritual preceptor and guide in the ways of the world. He had to be of good family and versed in the sacred traditions. Of impeccable character, he was supposed to have the arcane teaching of the Veda in mind but know the sciences of state craft and politics. There is some idea as well that he should have a higher kind of insight into the reality of things, which later times might come to call "enlightenment."[2]

The *Mahabharata* gives us an amplified picture of guruship: in one case where the seer Gaya comes to know the content of the Veda without study through, among other things, "the grace of the Guru" and in another where the guru functions as a kind of god for the Nisada prince, Ekalavya, "who makes a clay image of his acarya (or guru) and worships it to get the instruction refused by the teacher himself. By practicing weapons before that image he became in fact very skilled in shooting."[3]

Ascetic. While there clearly is some overlapping between the guru and the ascetic and the former may function specifically in the confines of respectable society, the latter has contributed elements of wildness and eccentricity to the picture. For example, the munis of the Veda are described as "vatarsana, kesin" and as wearing soiled, yellow garments.Kesin means "having long hair" and vatarsana has been translated as "having only the wind or air for one's waist girdle."[4] Does this mean that sometimes the munis went naked and sometimes wore clothing or indifferent condition? There is some evidence that the descriptive epithets may refer to specific orders of ascetics (*Taittiriya Aranyaka* I, 23 and II, 7): in the second of these two passages one reads the statement, "The Vatarsana sages were sramanas and urdhvamanthin." Sramana is a well known term for ascetic, while, " 'Urdhvamanthin' refers to their characteristic achievement that of keeping their penis tumescent without agitation or excitement."[5]

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[1] J. Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, Mouton and Co., The Hague, 1965, p. 237.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 244.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 252.

[4] G. S. Ghurye, *Indian Sadhus*, Bombay: The Popular Book Depot, 1953, p. 12. This work was republished without substantial change by Popular Prakashan in 1964.

There is no point in drawing far-reaching conclusions from these few references; but in the same way that we are wont to meditate upon the significance of the Mohenjodaro seal figures of "proto-Siva," we may choose to find in these literary references to nakedness and detachment from sexual life a prefiguring of the style of later ascetics, particularly those who follow Saivite or Tantric sadhanas. We may also conclude that these early groups varied in their religious practices.

Further evidence for the existence of the ascetic orders is that presented in the Jain and Buddhist traditions. The regularization of monastic life by Mahavira and Gautama may have served to correct the excesses of the pre-Hindu monks whom they converted or influenced. For Hinduism *per se* it would be necessary to wait until the time of Samkara (eighth to ninth centuries) and Gorakhnath (twelfth century) for such purifying reforms among the later Saivite and Tantric ascetics. Vaisnava monasticism developed relatively later and had a generally, though not always, more sedate character.

Avatara. The "descent" of the god into human emerges but indistinctly from the exalted and complex polytheism of the Vedic age. God in man may have been to a certain extent a "discovery" of the Upanisadic sages as well as a result of the experiments in meditation that prefigure the classifications presented in the Samkhya and Yoga darsanas.

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[5] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

But if Hindus discovered the divine in man *qua* man, it is also certain that they selectively revered certain divine "men," besides granting "divinity" to especially important human beings. The former process is fairly limited in scope in that Vishnu is the main source for a small number of avatars (traditionally ten) while the latter process proliferates enormously through the classical and middle ages and continues down to the present age: one might hold the view that Gautama, the Buddha, and Mahavira, the Tirthamkara, were, indeed, the first historical examples of these living "gods."

The identification of actual persons with the incarnations of Vishnu complicates the latter process as do the sectarian developments of Vaishnavism in the middle ages and the contributions of yogic and tantric theory. We are fortunately saved from even further complexity by virtue of the reluctance of Saivites to attribute "incarnation" to their chief deity. In short, we can propose that by the middle ages it was customary for Hindus to think of God in human form and that the role of the avatara became increasingly more prevalent in the way in which new sects conceived of their leadership and in the way in which that leadership presented itself for acceptance.

Saint. The Saint or Sant tradition itself contributes to the views held in modern Hinduism regarding such persons. There are at least two perspectives on the earlier saints: (1) From the point of view of devotion some of them were uncommonly fervent in their love for God. This is particularly true of Vaishnava saints, going backward to the *Pancaratra* tradition, thence through the Alvars, to the time of Tulsi Das and Sur Das and including the Maharashtrian saint dynasty of the devotees of Vithoba.

The tradition of Saiva Siddhanta is the parallel development in Saivism. For all these "bhakta" saints God is thought to be distinct from man although from the point of view of the devotees, with the exception of the Saiva saints, the saint himself might be thought of as an incarnation. (2) The tantric yogi who acquired *siddhi*, extraordinary "power," was a type of saint and one who aroused certain expectations in the masses regarding the abilities of all holy men.

In India, from the twelfth century onward the Muslim saints, commonly called Pirs or Sufis, were likewise credited with a special power, baraka, to perform actions appearing to be contrary to the laws of nature. They were, moreover, counted as "Friends of Allah" and while alive were approached to intercede on behalf of those suffering physical or material distress. After death the tomb of such a person was visited to attract God's attention and thereby to link one's petition, presented there, with the saint's previous example and conduct.

For the masses, even for Hindus, it may have sufficed to know that persons of such capacities could help them. In resorting to the Pirs, who gave instruction as well as performing miracles, the Hindus would have been challenged to a certain extent in their theological views — or at the very least they would have begun to break down the demarcations that might have kept Hindus and Muslims apart in spheres other than that of devotion to the saints. To a certain extent we observe this blurring of distinctions from the middle ages onward.

Thus the guru who "teaches" and the ascetic who "manifests" may combine in certain individuals who may further be thought of as avatars, roughly on the analogy of the mythic avatars of Vishnu, or as saints or both: the avatar and saint modes appear to be relatively the same, but certain distinctions are made on the basis of capacities, ideology and the importance of the cult.

II

Gorakhnath, Dattatreya and *Kabir*. In our survey of background materials we must make reference to several independent contributors to the thematic content of the latter Sai Baba movement. It is not absolutely certain who Gorakhnath was. Some scholars hold that he belonged originally to a Buddhist tantric sect of

Siddhas, but that he converted in due course to a sect of Saivite ascetics and became one of the leading figures of that order, namely, a Nath. The founder of this order was named Adinath. It is claimed by some that Adinath was Siva, but this probably does not imply an "incarnation"in the customary Hindu conception. Adinath is also depicted iconographically as a human being. Matsyendranath was the spiritual preceptor of Gorakhnath who in turn became the chief director of the order of Nathpanthis (followers of the Naths), some of whom are further identified by their pierced ears as Kanphata yogis.

It may be the case that Gorakhnath, having abandoned the Buddhist tantric way with its excesses, was able to attract to his order some members of such extreme yogi groups as the Kapalikas and Aghoris, renowned for their flesh, blood and wine consumption, who then adopted a more restrained regimen. The followers of Samkara were generally called samnyasi while Gorakhnath's monks used the epithet yogi, as did other ascetic groups.

Gorakhnath's order is peculiar and significant in relation to the Sai Baba movement for several reasons. There is evidence that the Nathpanthis have some connection with Islamic asceticism. In this respect they share a common trait with Kabir about whom we shall write in a moment. The chief of a Nathpanthi Akhada (roughly equivalent to a Western monastic house) is called a Pir. This may have been the assuming of "protective coloration" in an effort at disguise in the face of possible harassment from Muslim forces in some regions in which the Nathpanthis were numerous, namely, Afghanistan and Western Punjab.

However, it seems likely, too, that there may have been a deeper connection as well. This is most evident in the role of the Nathpanthi Pir, who as the leader of the Akhada was supposed to give advice or intercede with God through the use of his "powers" on behalf of clients in a manner similar to that of the Muslim Pir. The tombs of the Kanphata yogis were places of religious resort as are those of the Muslim saints.

Although not necessarily Muslim in origin, a principal focus of community and religious life in a Nathpanthi house is the hearth or dhuni whereon a fire is kept perpetually burning.

Dattatreya. Apparently a deified early ascetic, he figures prominently as the patron of Saivite mendicants. "The Puranic account of Dattatreya depicts him as always in ecstasy, surrounded by women, drinking wine and indulging in sex."[6] Yet he is said to have miraculous powers. Oddly enough, in the *Bhagavata Purana* he is mentioned as the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. His popularity in Maharashtra is unparalleled as compared with other parts of India. Iconographically, he is shown surrounded by animals, including dogs, that will figure in the symbolism of the Sai Baba saints.

Kabir. Born in the fifteenth century, he is counted among the most thorough going of the reforming ascetics in Hinduism and one who made major contributions in creating links between Muslims and Hindus. It is not known precisely whether he was born a Muslim or a Hindu but Charlotte Vaudeville is of the view that he belonged to a jati which had been converted from Hinduism to Islam in fairly recent times and had continued to call themselves yogis and live a householder's life.

Although a Hindu, apparently, by choice, and a theist, he taught an extreme form of devotion to the God without qualities; he also referred to the God of his inner experience as the Guru. There is some evidence that he had been trained in but had rejected the type of yoga practiced in the Nathpanthi order and there is even a tradition that he and Gorakhnath had met. However, Gorakhnath's dates, which must be prior to 1200 A.D. but not earlier than the end of the eleventh century, would have made such a meeting impossible. Kabir's humble origins, his love for all mankind whether Hindu, Muslim or otherwise, his reputed love of animals, his yogic connections (perhaps with the Nathpanthi order) and the uniquely synthetic character of his religious position point the direction toward the founder of the Sai Baba movement.

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[6] G. S. Ghurye, *Indian Sadhus*, The Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1953, p. 39.

III

Sai Baba. He is one of the most popular saints among the masses in central India today, and his picture can be found in shrines throughout the land. Temples in his honour seem to be spreading far from the centre of his cult. For example, I have visited two Sai Baba temples in Madras City and have seen photographs of a temple as far west as Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, and there is a temple in his honour at Mangalore on the Arabian Sea. His picture is widely displayed in Bombay, and there is a Sai Baba temple in that city as well.

One's impression from the literature about him by devotees is that he is coming to be regarded as a major incarnation, and may acquire the kind of pan-Indian devotion that figures like Shri Aurobindo and Shri Ramakrishna have. Although his appeal is certainly to the humble masses, he nevertheless has a large middle class following and seems able to satisfy the spiritual needs of many different kinds of people.

Sai Baba appeared in 1872 in a town in central Maharashtra known as Shirdi. He was a boy of about sixteen at the time and dressed as a Muslim *fakir* or mendicant. As we shall see, he was far from being a conventional follower of Islam, however. Very little is known about his family background. He claimed not to remember his parents or where he came from: but this is the common condition of advanced ascetics known as Avadhuta.

Hindus usually assert that he was of Brahmin origin and that, orphaned when very young, he was taken as disciple by a Muslim ascetic. There is some support for this in the fact that at the time of his death, he requested that only Brahmins should be with him. Moreover, a common way for Indian ascetics to acquire disciples is through the adoption of abandoned or orphaned children. It is also known that he had a Hindu guru called Venkusa.

Sai Baba's religious practices blended Hindu and Muslim elements. When he first came to Shirdi, he tried to take up lodgings in a temple in the town but was forbidden to do so by the priest who thought that he could not be a Hindu. (The same man later became one of his prominent devotees.) So he moved into a tiny, unused mosque which became his abode for the rest of his life. There he performed a kind of Hindu ritual with lights and incense. He kept a fire burning perpetually in a dhuni (and his followers keep it burning even today) in the manner of a Nathpanthi pir. His ritual practices included both Muslim Namaz (Arabic Salat) and Hindu prayers and offerings. From obscure origins he rose in later life to a commanding position as spiritual master and object of worship for a polymorphous body of devotees: Hindus, Muslims, Parsees and even Christians.

Sai Baba established himself as a saint through the performance of miracles; and it is chiefly because of his renowned Siddhis, preternatural powers, that his reputation has continued to grow long after his death. One can read volumes of collected experiences of his followers who have believed that it was the direct intervention of Sai Baba that brought them health, wealth, or remedy in some pressing life situation. He used the ash from the dhuni as a sacramental substance for the working of his miracles. This udi can be rubbed into the forehead or throat, swallowed, cast into a wound, or used in various ways to effect changes. But in addition to sacred ash Sai Baba often exercised direct means such as multi-location, warnings, appearance in dreams, and other devices to aid his followers.

When Sai Baba was asked why he wasted his time in the manipulation of siddhis, a practice frowned upon by the most respectable authorities on yoga, he replied that he did so in order to attract people to the deeper meanings in spiritual life. He said, "I give my devotees what they want so that they will begin to want what I want to give them."[7] A group of close disciples came to live with him permanently at Shirdi, and since his death in 1918 a fairly large complex of buildings, including inns for pilgrims, has been erected near his tomb.

With this much information in mind it should be possible to consider some of the parallels one can note on the one side between Sai Baba and those earlier traditions of Indian religious life that we have mentioned and to show briefly how the saints who succeed him follow his pattern yet innovate in accordance with their special teachings or practices.

It is usual to point out that Hinduism is a syncretistic religion and that it develops by a process of assimilation and digestion rather than exclusion and destruction. This tendency appears in the life and teaching of Kabir where the distinction between what is Muslim and what is Hindu is blurred. Sai Baba's early history, if the account in the official statements of the All India Sai Samaj is reliable, would contribute to the view that it was natural for him to combine Muslim and Hindu expressions.

Overall there is a striking similarity between the saint of Shirdi and Kabir.[8] For example, one of Sai Baba's favourite terms for the Godhead was Fakir, the name for a Muslim ascetic. The first teacher of Sai Baba was such a Fakir; so when the saint refers to the Godhead as the Fakir, it is like Kabir's reference to the Guru, who is the God within the heart, but who was also, traditionally, a saint named Ramananda. Such similarities reach out to include both saints having Muslim and Hindu devotees, their humble life style, and their somewhat acerbic actions or teachings—Kabir's, of course, taking form in verse while Sai

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[7] Arthur Osborne, *The Incredible Sai Baba*. Bombay, Orient Longmans 1957, p. 23.

[8] Sai Baba sometimes spoke of himself as a reincarnation of Kabir, the poet-saint of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century who had both Hindu and Muslim disciples and taught each in the terms of their own religion." *Ibid*, p. 50.

Baba's teachings are compiled in the simple narrative of his devotees.

Moreover, as we have seen, Sai Baba was a celibate, remaining in one place, performing miracles and admonishing his disciples, and keeping a fire perpetually burning in a dhuni. Therefore, it would not be unreasonable to assume that he was following customs already sanctified in the Nathpanthi tradition with its own degree of Muslim-Hindu assimilation. The Nathpanthi yogis are well known in the Shirdi region and the picture of their founders can be purchased at the Shirdi shrine. We note, too, that dogs, which iconographically accompany Dattatreya or figure in the Kabir legends, find their counterparts in the iconography of Sai Baba. To the functions of guru, ascetic and saint, Sai Baba adds that of avatar as many of his followers consider him to be the main incarnation of God in this age.

Upasani Baba, and Mata Godavari. The second saint in this series, Kasinath Govinda Upasani Sastri, known as Upasani Maharaj or Upasani Baba, was born in 1870 in the village of Satana. He came from a scholarly, Brahmin family, but one without wealth; however, one of his brothers became professor of Sanskrit at Ferguson College, Poona, and his grandfather had been a legal adviser to the Maharaja of Baroda.

Upasani Baba himself was not able to finish any of the standard courses in school and was considered a failure before he had even reached adolescence. Two unfortunate marriages in early youth —ending with the death of the spouse—together with unpleasant family experiences induced him to leave his home for extended periods of time during which he began to practice yoga and meditation. As a young man he managed to get more of a grip on himself and learned enough Sanskrit and Ayurvedic medicine to set up in practice. It seemed that his life was acquiring some stability and he married for a third time, but afterward he was deprived of his savings by a bad investment. He had continued to practice yoga but suffered a kind of accident while doing pranayama and nearly died from having seemingly lost a part of his automatic breathing function.

In the course of events he was at last persuaded to visit Sai Baba at Shirdi and their first meeting took place on June 27, 1911. He resided with Sai Baba for a number of years thereafter and became his disciple—in the meantime his third wife died in 1912. For reasons that are not entirely clear, he left Sai Baba in 1915—after apparently having made progress in spiritual development with the aid of his teacher. It was assumed by many that Upasani Baba would succeed Sai Baba at Shirdi, but such was not to be the case. After 1915, although he visited Shirdi occasionally, he never remained for long. Instead in 1917 he put up a small hut in a cremation ground at Sakuri three miles distant from Shirdi.

After Sai Baba's death in 1918, Upasani Baba gradually gathered his own disciples until he had a very large following and was famous in his own right among the religious personalities of Maharashtra; with shaven head and dressed only in gunny cloth he exhibited an extreme ascetic demeanor. Intelligent and a gifted speaker, he began to give discourses which have been preserved and published.

But it seems that there were two episodes in his life as "saint" that were especially striking and that have tended to shape the course of his ashram's activities. On December 25, 1922 in the ashram precincts (now a principal part of the main shrine room) Upasani Maharaj locked himself in a wooden cage where he remained for about fifteen months. This was an act of tapas (described in his case as a kind of atonement) for the welfare of his disciples and the well-being of the world. It was while in the cage that his disciples recognized him as a divine being, an avatar. Since his death, the image and main worship of the saint refer to this event: a silver cage having been erected complementary to the original wooden structure that contains Upasani Baba's marble image. The saint's remains are buried just in front of the cage, and there his disciples prostrate during the course of their daily devotions.

A second striking occurrence was the institution of the ashram's main work. In the year 1924, a young girl, about ten years of age, named Godavari, came to live in the ashram. In 1928 she was dedicated to the life of asceticism, became Upasani Baba's principal disciple and thereafter was accorded the same honours granted to him. With Upasani Baba and "Mata" Godavari as their preceptors a number of young women entered the ashram as nuns or kanyas and offered themselves entirely to the devotional life. At one point the nuns, together with Upasani Baba, underwent a marriage ceremony in which the kanyas were symbolically united with God through Upasani Baba who held an image of Shri Krishna in his hands during the rites. The exact significance of this "divine marriage" puzzled certain Hindus who criticized Upasani Baba's motives.

Since the elder saint's death on December 25, 1941, Mata Godavari has ruled the ashram alone. The property and buildings have increased considerably and there are a number of male, celibate devotees who, worshipping and living in the ashram apart from the nuns, nevertheless emulate them in their dedicated lives. There were about forty kanyas there when I visited the ashram in 1969.

One would like to report extensively about the life at Sakuri, officially called, "Sri Upasani Baba Kanyakumari Sansthan," but there is not room here. Nevertheless, the following features are particularly noteworthy. The kanyas pass the whole day and into the night in continuous worship of certain Hindu divinities: Upasani Baba himself, Shirdi Sai Baba, Mata Godavari as an incarnate deity, Krishna and others. These activities begin as early as four o'clock in the morning and last until ten o'clock in the evening. On festivals the women offer Vedic sacrifices in a special hall built for that purpose; because of this and the training in Sanskrit given to the nuns, Upasani Baba has been viewed by some as the restorer of Hindu women to a place of dignity in the ritual and intellectual life of Hinduism, lost to them since the Vedic age.

It is obvious that Upasani Baba departed radically from the course taken by Sai Baba. There is almost no suggestion of Muslim influence in the purely Hindu atmosphere of Sakuri. Upasani Baba's personal austerity which was only a degree greater than that of Shirdi Sai Baba is not continued in the overt style of the nuns who wear bright coloured saris and the jewels and adornment of married women.

Nonetheless, one can observe certain "motifs" that link the two centres together implicitly or self-consciously. One observes that the main temple for the worship of the male devotees at Sakuri is dedicated to Dattatreya, the famous patron of the Naths and other Maharashtrian ascetics with whom Sai Baba himself may be partly identified. A humbler linkage occurred to me as I heard reports that stray dogs were granted sanctuary at Sakuri and that Mata Godavari herself owned a dog: all this perhaps in deference to Sai Baba's kindly attitude toward animals and the legends to the same effect about Kabir and the obvious relation to Dattatreya. Self-consciously, in certain "holy pictures" published at Sakuri, one sees that the relationships between Sai Baba, Upasani Baba and Mata Godavari are explicitly stated. Because of Mata Godavari's central location in one particular picture I have in mind, flanked by the two other saints, it would appear that the message conveyed is that the succession has passed to her, even preemptively. Aside from the absence of a Muslim theme at Sakuri, the other thing missing is the use of sacred ash as a medium for miracles, nor even very much apparent concern for miracles on the part of the followers of the Sakuri saints.

Sathya Sai Baba. Finally, for purposes of the present article we are led to consider a relatively young saint, named Sathya Sai Baba by his followers. He was born on November 23, 1926 and almost from the moment of his birth became the occasion for curious speculation, which afterwards developed into a conviction on the part of many, that he was the Sai Baba of Shirdi reborn. According to the official biographer of this saint (N. Kasturi), he began to manifest powers or siddhis from birth. These together with his often peculiar behaviour led members of his own family to the conclusion that he was either an avatar or possessed by some demonic force. They observed him closely through childhood and the "symptoms" appeared to worsen. An Ayurvedic doctor applied a hot iron to his scalp to shock him back into his senses. The denouement took place on May 23, 1940, when the saint was fourteen years of age:

> . . . he rose from bed as usual, but soon afterwards called the members of the household round him and presented them with sugar-candy and flowers taken from 'nowhere.' At this time the neighbours rushed in. He gave each a ball of rice cooked in milk, also flowers and sugar-candy, all manifested by a mere wave of his hand. Sathya seemed to be in such a very jovial state that Venkapa Raju [his father] was sent for to see him in this welcome happy mood. Venkapa Raju rushed and had to squeeze his way through the crowd. The people asked him to wash his feet, hands and face before approaching the Giver of Boons. This incensed Venkapa Raju. He was not impressed at all, thinking it was a trick and that Sathya was hiding things somewhere and producing them by sleight of hand. . . . He laughed a bitter laugh and accosted the boy within everyone's hearing, "This is getting too much; it must be stopped." Arming himself with a stick, he moved a step nearer and threatened to beat it out of him. "Are you a God, or a ghost, or a madcap? Tell me!" he shouted. Promptly came the answer, the Announcement that had been held back so long, "I am Sai Baba."[9]

[9] N. Kasturi, *The Life of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*. Bombay, Dolten Printers, 1969, p. 46.

Because Sathya Sai Baba's career is still developing it is difficult to approach him in the same manner as one would a saint who had passed from this world. Moreover, because his fame has been great throughout his adult life and been enhanced through publicity in the Indian "media" and abroad, he has earned the unmistakable glamour of a public personality. One finds it difficult to conceive of him except in the midst of crowds or to understand his undoubtedly fascinating personality apart from the rapport that one sees existing between himself and those crowds as well as with the numerous groups of close disciples. When with him, one feels as though in the presence of a prince who commands the wealth and allegiance of his position.

The biography of Sathya Sai Baba compares with the reminiscenses of the devotees of Shirdi Sai Baba and is filled with page after page of stories of miracles. These help to complete the points of contact that we have been able to perceive on the basis of Indian tradition as well as the special patterns of the Sai Baba dynasty. Like the first of these saints the new Sai Baba, in his counselling and miracle working, resembles the Gorakhnath tradition of yogis. It might appear difficult to fit him within the same framework as a scantily clad, ash smeared Nathpanthi adept at waiting on clients in the courtyard of his monastery, but something of the same procedure takes place in the ashrams where Sathya Sai Baba lives and the big houses in Madras, New Delhi or Bombay where he goes to give darshan. Devotees come to all these places: at least to see him or to touch his feet or his garment, or to present a petition to him in a letter, or if at all possible, to be granted a private interview in which their requests or problems can be discussed personally.

I have talked with various individuals who had such interviews and from among them I should like to mention two. One very wealthy man presented the case of his daughter-in-law who was in a London clinic waiting to be operated on for cancer. He reported to me that through Sathya Sai Baba's help the cancer disappeared, apparently over night. The second person was a servant in a hotel in Bangalore. He confided to me that he had waited throughout the night in the ashram garden at Whitefields (a suburb of Bangalore) and had been admitted to see the saint in the morning. The boy had simply asked for assistance to get a decent start in life. Sathya Sai Baba counselled him to study to prepare himself for a better paying job. He was, therefore, working and going to school at the same time. These two incidents (the one dramatic, the other more prosaic) could no doubt be multiplied by hundreds in the course of a year.

It must be obvious that besides claiming to be Sai Baba incarnate, Sathya Sai Baba demonstrates his right to the title in his capacity as a miracle worker. The investigation of such "miracles" is outside the competence of the historian and should be taken up by those who are qualified to determine how they are performed. Sathya Sai Baba himself said, when asked about the healing recounted above, "It all depends on faith . . . faith."

Nevertheless, it is important to report on one of these unusual phenomena because it lends itself to the pattern in the Sai Baba movement as a whole. Sathya Sai Baba is perhaps best known for producing vibhuti, the sacred ash, in an apparently paranormal manner. I observed him in this on the following occasion: together with several other Western visitors, I had been sitting with Sathya Sai Baba in one of the rooms in the ashram building. The saint stood up at one point and walked over to me and asked me whether I wished to have some vibhuti. He closed his hand and told me to hold mine out beneath. As he opened his palm about a tablespoon of the fine white ash fell into my palm. Afterwards, he did the same thing for several other people in the room. In a photographer's shop in Madras I saw a collection of pictures taken on Sathya Sai Baba's birthday. On a platform in front of a huge gathering of people, he was shown with his arm thrust into an uplifted widemouthed vase. From the vase itself a great quantity of vibhuti was flowing, enough to be carried away in buckets.

What interests one is the apparent relationship between the udi of the dhuni of Shirdi Sai Baba and the produced vibhuti of Sathya Sai Baba. Although the circumstances have changed, the substance's use remains the same: the latter like the former is prized for its sacramental and healing qualities. And need one mention again the ancient tradition of the Nathpanthis to which it hearkens back?

The competence of Sathya Sai Baba to serve as the successor of Shirdi Sai Baba is increasingly recognized in the Sai Baba cult. For instance in one of Shirdi Sai Baba's shrines in Madras, Sathya Sai Baba had attended the dedication of the temple a few years back. Apart from his name, there is no discernible Muslim influence in the Sathya Sai Baba cult.

Of the four saints described here, with the possible exception of Upasani Baba, their main contribution to Indian religous life does not seem to consist in literary or polemical works that reach a large audience. One might say that they accomplish their work through "gesture" rather than through the spoken or written word, although the sayings and discourses of some of them are to a certain extent in print. From "gesture" and its impact on the observer, one can conclude that the attraction of these saints exists in the realm of what one might call "relationship." Those who are drawn to them, including the large public that may not even see them very often, or may know them best in photographs or in magazine and newspaper articles, or by reputation, apprehend their "reality" in a very special way. This is the effect of darshan whether proximate or distant.

For a privileged few the living saints, and sometimes the departed as well in dreams or visions, bestow an initiation that creates an indissoluble bond between the Master and the disciple. This is described by Hindus as the closest of all human relationships. The followers of these saints declare that they direct all their devotion to the gods or God through the saint whose photograph takes the place of any other image in the domestic worship.

The greatest honour for Hindu family members is to have such a saint stay with them. Many wealthy people have rooms in their homes set aside for the saint's use when he visits a particular city. It is an old Indian custom to vie for the privilege of giving hospitality to saints and there are stories from as far back as the middle ages of saints who preferred to stay with the poor rather than the rich. Everywhere the presence of a saint is a source of joy, mingled with excitement. He affords to his devotees not only a sense of attraction for himself, but the common devotion to the saint creates a bond among the devotees. Whereas it is difficult for Hindus of unlike caste, social status or wealth to meet together and be at ease in most of the course of life, yet in homes, ashrams, and even in the context of the nation a socially unifying experience becomes possible in the presence of the saint.

One should keep in mind that as compared with the number of persons aspiring to yogic or other attainments, the number of realized saints in India is small; hence in a religious community which treasures the company, work and teaching of such individuals, it should not be surprising that the recognized saints become the famous local or national figures that they are.

CRITIQUE

With the Sai Baba movement as background to our thought, let us consider some of the issues of method in relation to interpretation. For purposes of discussion we may propose a three-level approach: (1) Demonstration, (2) Organization, (3) Intention. *Demonstration* refers to what it is one wishes to write about. In the case of the foregoing examples there must be data about saints: their literatures, histories, pictures; one's impressions of them; the origins of gurus, ascetics, avatars and saints in India in general and those of a community of saints in particular. If one could achieve perfect objectivity here, one would be near the point of "epoch," or bracketing, that the phenomenologists describe in their analysis of perception. The question of attitude, one's own emotional residues as they affect the subject and the degree of awareness of one's own emotional slanting, cannot be neglected in respect to what it is that one sees (or what is demonstrated) in the religious history that one studies.

It is largely due to the attitude one has or acquires in relation to the demonstrated content of the religion that patterns, the *Organization*, will become apparent and one will begin to write about one's subject. Depending upon how the *Organization* emerges, the historian who has sufficient insight into his attitude (or control of it—indeed, he should treasure his scholarly neutrality!) would hope that, through his analysis, something of the basic meaning or life, the *Intention*, of the religious expression might be revealed. In a real sense the *Organization* and *Intention* of the religious expression are part and parcel of what the historian is or becomes in respect to it. Meaning, therefore, is not something objective in its own right but must be perceived by one who understands and can communicate. This does not, however, preclude the existence of criteria for critically evaluating the communication of meaning.

Religions involve many dimensions of human behaviour and creativity. Vis-a-vis some of these it may be possible to have a thoroughly objective approach—in enumerating caste allegiance or marriage customs, for example, through a structural or mathematical method. However, an historian of religions must find something human, which is valued and ambiguous, before he begins to feel that he has travelled toward any closeness to his object.

The analysis of religious history can be compared with that of the literature, the painting or the philosophical creativity of a people. As in the case of an art critic or student of intellectual history, the observer of another's religion must try to see in a way that will be true to the reality of the religion itself—will through the demonstrational aspect of the religion, mediated by organization, present the intention as vividly and truly as possible. Hardly anyone can claim the erudition or the insight sufficient to know another's religion as it is in itself, let alone have the technique to accomplish the task of interpretation perfectly. However, that will never prevent those who are so motivated from the attempt—anymore than the ineffable nature of great art can resist interpretation. In fact in both religion and art, interpretation is an absolute imperative.

We must attempt to understand; we express understanding through what we say or write. It is because of this, despite the obstacles, that histories of art and religion are written. At the same time, one must ask the question whether it is possible to understand another's religion (or art or literature or music) without judicious respect for the proprieties we have suggested in our approach to expression of the understanding of another's religion?

II

At this point it might be apropos, by way of illustration, to discuss some of the conclusions reached in an earlier article published in the *Journal of Asian Studies* by Professor Agehananda Bharati on the character of modern Hinduism and its saint leadership. It is not necessary here to review his statement in entirety but only to point out some of those areas in which the present author feels it would be appropriate to raise questions. Thus Professor Bharati suggests, first of all, that a suitable approach to contemporary Hinduism is one that he defines as "cultural criticism." These are the guidelines which he sets up for that pursuit:

> I suggest that a list of apologetic statements of these agents *defines* the Renaissance, as it exemplifies the apologetic. For an ex post facto evaluation of these statements, as well as for eliciting them from his subjects—modern Indians, that is—I have been using a method with good results which I called a few

> years ago "Cultural Criticism." Playing Peters [*sic*] Sellers' imitation of Mr. Banerji creating an Indian version of *My Fair Lady*, or presenting polychromes depicting Indian gods, national leaders and film actors, or reading Sivananda solecisms to the modern Hindu in a critical and discursive manner nor only elicits angry responses, but it also brings out more radical and reinforced formulations of the apologetic.

Whatever its other merits may be, my own view is that this proposal fails to meet the proposed requirements for making a religious expression intelligible. It largely ignores the demonstrational and organizational levels, where in all aspects of the study of modern Hinduism most work remains to be done, and jumps to what might be called a "pseudo-intentional" level, revealed in the emotional response of a Hindu to a comment about his own religion.

Moreover, one would have to demur at the following statement, "The modal attitude of the Renaissance is anti-scholarly and anti-intellectual . . . it is camouflaged until there is a confrontation with scholarly dialogue within the Indian tradition." The point is that this conclusion appears far too categorical, even arbitrary, at the level of intention and that it would be difficult to establish its basis at the demonstrational or organizational levels. From Ram Mohan Roy onward each of the great religious leaders (Ramakrishna, the Tagores, Dayanand Saraswati, Vivekananda, Besant, Aurobindo, and Gandhi in some of his roles) not to mention other, lesser known but very influential local saintly leaders, including the saints of the Sai Baba movement, whose antecedents and milieu will no doubt turn out to be more complex than we were able to discuss in this article, made a distinctive intellectual contribution: whether it served the purposes of some puristic view of what Hinduism is or was is of little consequence to Hinduism as a living religion.

To enable one to understand each of these individuals and other dimensions of contemporary Hinduism to which they relate, one would have to provide sufficiently convincing basic data in respect to which one could then draw conclusions as to the development that actually obtains between the contemporary religious figure and previous Indian religious history as well as the reconstructionist or modernist influences that enter into or emerge from the present situation.

A third analytical concept which Bharati imposes on the study of modern Hinduism is the rubric, "Pizza-effect." This is described as the reimportation into Hinduism of Hindu products which have been enhanced either by a certain acceptance or transformation in a journey abroad. The main examples are Vivekananda, whose success at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 in Chicago and in his subsequent travels and lectures before Western audiences made him a phenomenon in India upon his return—or alternatively, Paul Carus ("Reverse Pizza-effect") who, as a Westerner, imposed "modernity," "the subjective," etc. upon such worthies as the Buddha, in the Western discovery of Eastern religions. The central discussion rests on the supposed misuse of the Gita as a prop of the Renaissance:

> It might be objected that the pizza-effect to the fore in situations which are not central to the Indian Renaissance; but there is at least one instance which impinged on both the political and the religious ideology of twentieth century India. Indians and sympathetic occidentals alike have come to regard the Bhagavad Gita as the Hindu Bible. No challenge against this notion has ever emerged from the spokesmen of the Renaissance, yet this claim is not part of an informed view about Hindu lore. The people who might challenge it are the ones who won't: the grassroots scholars, the orthodox pandits, cannot participate in the give-and-take of the Indian Renaissance with its English language premises, due to lack of economic and social access to a strictly urban milieu. But the informed Hindu must contest

the Bhagavad Gita's renaissance status: it is not canonical like the Vedas or the Upanisads: it is smriti, belonging to a category of texts the acceptance of which is not incumbent upon the Hindu.

Here Bharati fails to consider the intransigence of the *facts* of religious history. What is the point in criticizing modern Hindus for using the Gita in such-and-such a manner? If they do use it or consider it in the way he suggests, it is as part of *their* religious experience or expression. (I doubt that such "grassroots scholars" he exalts exist anymore in complete isolation from all modern influences: there are after all the radio and cinema! The vernacular preaching of the modern saints is as important, surely, as their use of English—and not all are fluent English speakers by any means. A more fundamental question is that of the Renaissance itself in Bharati's critique. Does he refer to everything in modern Hinduism or only what is English medium or only what is led by saints—of whom there are more than one can conveniently meet in the various Indian states and, moreover, who are difficult to lump together? It appears that what Bharati does not like is *Renaissance*. What he likes is *grassroots*!)

The scholar's preferred task should be to understand how or to what purpose such a phenomenon as the popularity of the Gita, arises within a certain context rather than to try to build a case against it. Shouldn't it be obvious that much of the apologetic of modern Hinduism attempts to Hinduize Western structures and, thereby, both to counteract the inroads of spiritual Westernization as well as to provide entry to Hinduism in some measure, however limited, for non-Indian devotees?

In this connection, the Bhagavad Gita has been especially important—providing the kind of accessible and universalizing scripture for Hindus that Christianity has in the New Testament. This is not to say, however, as Bharati implies, that the Bhagavad Gita was not important in ancient times, as exemplified by the commentary on it of Samkara and other philosophers, and the fact that it was often afforded the status of Sruti even though it was not technically so. Furthermore, "Pizza-effect" is hardly worthy of the decisive interactions that have characterized Hindu destiny, especially since the advent of the Muslims in India. The interaction of Hindus and Westerners is as much an aspect of modern Hinduism as the interaction of Hindus and Muslims has been and not surprisingly has brought about profound changes.

In closing we might point to a further failure to see relations or types emerging in modern Hindu experience from legitimate sources in the past—from the level of demonstration. It is particularly striking, in relation to the analysis that I have attempted to make of the Sai Baba movement, to read the following:

> The seemingly boundless gullibility of the modern devotee bafles occidental scholars. A British trained Indian surgeon at Nairobi and a top-ranking economic consultant at the United Nations quite independently of each other claimed without any hesitation that Sathya Sai Baba can and does cure incurable diseases like cancer from a distance, just by concentrating on the patient and that the Baba gives *bhasma* (consecrated sandalwood and other wood ashes) to thousands of devotees from his palms, without any visible material supply out of nothing. Both of these men claimed that they witnessed these events in person several times. (P. 283)

Rather than execrating the "gullible devotee," might one not better oneself to the effort to try to understand and explain the significance of Sathya Sai Baba, his style, and actions as they are in themselves and to see these elements against the background of the Sai Baba movement and other dimensions of Hinduism, past and present? In the case of the study of modern Indian saints, one cannot over-emphasize the need to evolve criteria that will make it possible to describe our understanding of these individuals in language other than that of the adoring devotee or the hostile sceptic.

The present article in its various parts has endeavoured to discuss a few preliminary notions and their implications but much more work by many scholars still needs to be done before we have a technique refined enough to explore adequately the multitudinous aspects of contemporary Hinduism or its saints.

6. THE DIVINE PSYCHOTHERAPIST

DR D. DHAIRYAM

Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba is the most potent influence on hundreds of thousands of devotees across the world. He affects each individual devotee in a very special and unique manner. I am eager to express myself on the manner in which he has influenced me. In order to do this, I have been compelled to write about myself. In referring to Bhagavan's ideas, philosophy, and religion, I am merely expressing my very limited conception of them which might well be completely off the mark.

I was brought up in a very rigid Roman Catholic family. Soon I came to feel that the divisions among people created by the fanaticism of various religions were responsible for a lot of evils and unhappiness in the present day world. The seven years that I spent in the USA, especially in New York City, were quite crucial years in revising my philosophy of life and my religious outlook. I had at various times joined various liberal, broad-based and universally oriented religious groups.

One was the Ethical Culture Society of New York, which undercuts the reality and the need for various gods and the various rituals that every religion feels the necessity of inculcating in its members. The Society believes that only the practice of ethical values and principles can bring the many peoples together irrespective of race, creed and language. Another was the Bahai Religion which believes in the brotherhood of man. The third was the Unitarian Church which welcomes persons of various beliefs into their fold. All that they require is honesty and sincerity of conviction and a broad religious outlook based on tolerance and understanding of other faiths. Another was the Moral Rearmament Movement founded by Dr Buchman, which also emphasizes the unity of all religious beliefs when stripped of the rituals and other ideas that divide religion from religion. They believe in the four principles of complete honesty, complete purity, complete love, and complete unselfishness. They declare that the more a man follows his conscience according to these four fundamental truths, the more he can attain spirituality and salvation, not only for himself but for all mankind.

I was very enthused by these religious movements and tried to identify with each of them. But I was not able to do so as I felt a fundamental lack in each of them. There was no personal relationship with the supreme being which could be the great and ultimate motivating factor for developing and following spiritual beliefs and practices which could unite mankind together.

By this time in America, I had made some progress in the study, training, and practice of psychotherapy. Psychotherapy is a science of helping individuals to overcome personal problems and to develop better, happier, and more productive ways of relating and living with people. This help is rendered by getting the individual to understand how his mind, his feelings, and his emotions have been developed from his childhood and how they can be changed, and by helping him to develop a deeper and more constructive philosophy of life.

I practised as a psychotherapist in New York for about three years. It was a most rewarding experience in that I realized the universality of human problems and the eternal quest of individuals for psychological and spiritual maturity. American men and women of all walks of life, of all ages, came for psychotherapy because they felt they were unhappily adjusted at home, at work, and with friends. They all felt that their religions had failed them and could give them no support or direction by which they could make their lives meaningful and useful to themselves and to others. It was interesting to me, an Indian, to observe how these Americans from different racial stocks, various religious beliefs, and various social and cultural differences had the same universal problem of loneliness, insecurity, lack of affection, a feeling of worthlessness or uselessness, anger, hatred, and most important—spiritual emptiness or vacuum.

It was a great experience to watch how they slowly searched and found better answers to their problems. Psychotherapy and psycho-analysis seemed to be a better answer to their problems. Psychotherapy and psycho-analysis seemed to be a better answer to my quest for a fulfilling religion. It helped me to live a better and more constructive life and provided a method for helping others to do the same.

THE DIVINE PSYCHOTHERAPIST

I came back to India to practise my profession. A few years later I had the supreme blessing of coming in contact with Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba. My wife, who has been a devotee of Baba for a long number of years, introduced me to his divine presence. My first contact with Baba bound me to him. The fact that He was God himself or that He was continuously performing various miracles, many of which I had personally witnessed, did not influence me as much as His great compassion and understanding of people and their problems. Immediately, I said to myself. "Here is a supreme psychotherapist. He has come into the world to have compassion on the multitudes and bring them happiness and worthwhileness in life."

Where the human psychotherapist helps the individual slowly and laboriously over many years with principles and methods which are themselves subject to much controversy, Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba helps hundreds every day by seeing them for a few minutes and bestowing on them his divine compassion and understanding and help with the utmost casualness, simplicity, immediacy. Prasanthi Nilayam, the abode of his divine presence, is a divine psychotherapeutic centre. People come from far and near, many from the sophisticated Western countries, to spend days and weeks in that ashram. They may not even get a personal interview with Baba. This is specially so on special days of celebration when tens of thousands gather at that place. But each individual, be he the most sophisticated millionaire or a poor illiterate peasant from the distant corners of India, goes away spiritually uplifted, enlightened and psychologically more secure, with his personality more strengthened.

Bhagavan's darshan is a unique event in this land which has had the traditional belief in darshan for so many centuries. Each individual experiences a personal dialogue with Bhagavan where he is able to communicate with Bhagavan his problems, his conflicts, and his aspirations and where he, in return, receives enlightenment, solace, support, and solutions to his conflicts.

THE OTHER SCIENCE

Avatars will always remain unpredictable, mysterious, incomprehensible. Baba has told us that no one can succeed in unravelling His Reality, His Nature, and His Truth. Yet, man feels a perennial need to analyse events and phenomena concerning avatars and uper-human personages and to arrive at conclusions, defective or incomplete.

Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba is the first Avatar of the Age of Science. He encourages the scientific spirit of inquiry, for He advises every one to "come, see, examine, experience, and then, believe." Many eminent scientists are His devotees. He understands and appreciates their researches and discoveries. He is fully aware of the benefits that science and technology have showered on mankind; He is not averse to making the fullest use of such. He has established Colleges of science, and fosters research and study. But Bhagavan avers that spirituality transcends science, and that only those who have so transcended can find God.

Science pursues the question: How? Spirituality asks the question: Why? By whom? Or, by what?

Bhagavan declares that science needs better direction and guidance, which the scientists themselves cannot now muster. He says that only spiritual leaders, venerated, and accepted by the people as the prime movers of all that is good and vital, can give that lead. Now, science has, in the words of Bhagavan, no "humanity." It fills people only with emptiness, loneliness, and desperation. It is a cancerous growth, fomenting wars and hatred, supplying weapons to the angry nations of the world to destroy each other.

India too is infected by this insanity and it has accepted the highly capitalized science of the West as her goal. Already, she is feeling the painful effects of cancerous growth. Science has become too colossal and all-pervasive.

In spite of centuries of adherence to the philosophy of simple living and high thinking, India too is drawn into the whirlpool, by the time-spirit. Though every nation is aware of the evil that is spawned by the mighty giant called Science, no nation has so far evolved a method of channelizing science towards the spiritual, as well as the moral uplift of man, apart from its current contribution towards his material comfort and happiness.

Bhagavan has the answer. He has come for this very purpose, to save humanity from the tentacles of unchecked science. He says, "Everyone should realize that the science of self-discovery is his birth-right! He must value it as a life-saver; he must earn it and use it for his progress. That other science was explored and established by sages, who laid down its laws and methodology in clear and concise terms, for all to be attracted by it and to start practising it."

Not to know this science and not to benefit by it is to inflict on oneself great loss. As a result of the discoveries these sages made, India has been, for centuries, the spiritual leader of all mankind. She has the potential even now, in spite of overwhelming odds; the spark that Baba can confer is enough to ignite it once again and develop it into a mighty conflagration. India can again become, as a result of the ministration of the avatar, God-filled, and God-led. Its spiritual preceptors can once again achieve the eminence and authority they had in the courts of the ancient kingdoms of India.

In those days, the guru and the sanyasi instructed the rulers on the ideals they must place before them, and the most moral means they should use to reach them. The rulers consulted them and respected their wishes and their advice. Similarly, in India tomorrow, politicians and scientists have to keep before them the advice of the spiritual leaders, if India must advance into peace and plenty.

Bhagavan, in His Divine Grace and Wisdom, has inaugurated a grassroots spiritual resurgence in India through the thousands of Sathya Sai Seva Samithis, and allied units of moral uplift, like the Mahila Vibhag, the Seva Dal, and the Bal Vikas. Everyone attached to these centres of service is transformed into a humble, earnest sadhaka, seeking to correct his faults and to make himself or herself a better instrument in the hands of Bhagavan for the fulfilment of the task on which the avatar has come.

The avatar is geared for modern times, and so, recognizing that the world has shrunk into a small neighbourhood colony, He deals with spiritual growth on a global level.

Baba knows that the emptiness inherent in the machinist and technological culture of the West, fast spreading into the East, will induce the forlorn, fear-ridden people into various isms, that promise speedy victory of one type or other. These proclaim themselves as short cuts to salvation. The young as well as the old turn to hippieism, to drugs, and to various exhibitionistic, esoteric cults. These attract, because they provide an escape from the hard realities of life and its urgent call for shouldering social and individual responsibilities. But the entrants seldom know that these isms end in disillusionment and despair.

Bhagavan insists on the hard way, the ancient way, the way that roughens and rewards richly. Not for him the life of indulgence or indolence, with a few minutes or hours of meditation in an air-conditioned room. He is against such made-easies; he decries part-time devotion, and part-time sadhanas.

Spiritual leaders in India are easily impressed by the large number of foreigners that flock their ashrams and crowd into their classes. They little realise that the hunger of millions across the world for spiritual sustenance and guidance is deep and disturbing. They are prepared to trek to the ends of the world to taste what is offered as food to relieve their hunger. These gurus travel abroad, and revel in publicity. But, they trail away into oblivion leaving the people as hungry as ever. Bhagavan is definite that the teachings of the Rishis should not be watered to suit the whims of those who demand a cure.

I feel certain that Bhagavan will visit other countries and bring about spiritual resurgence. He has often declared that. He must set India in order before He proceeds abroad. He is determined to have a spiritually resurgent India as the standard-bearer of the New Era of Dharmic Renaissance.

I have often wondered about His first and, until the moment of writing, His only visit to a land across the seas, to Africa, to the State of Uganda. Bhagavan goes to persons in their darkest hour. When He moved amongst the Indians in Uganda, He must have been aware that, before long, they were to face chaos and ruin. He spread the message of Love and Fortitude. The Africans too are His children, and they needed His blessing. He knew that both Indians and Africans were passing through critical times and that all this experience was worthwhile as a step in the process of African evolution.

Bhagavan is against the modern craze for quick results and little effort. He preaches no new religion, no strange cult. He accepts all religions as different paths that lead to the mountain top of enlightenment and peace. He reiterates the basic disciplines of all religions: sathya (Truth), dharma (morality), shanti (equanimity), and prema (love).

Above all, He emphasizes the practice of Love. Love is God; Live in love, He says. Love is the quality that distinguishes a cultured man, a sadhak, an aspirant, a devotee and a practitioner of spiritual systems. Bhagavan declares, "You are imprisoned in the ego; you have to liberate yourselves quickly and safely. But, most of you do not seek from Me the key to this liberation! You ask from Me trash and tinsel, petty little cures and gains; very few desires to get from Me the thing I have come to give, namely, liberation itself. Even among those few who seek liberation, only a small percentage stick sincerely to the path of sadhana. Among them, only an infinitesimal number succeed."

In the present world crisis of character, Bhagavan's grace will certainly act as a powerful catalytic. It will bring about a transformation among the peoples of the world. One can observe that the groups who flock to Baba for spiritual strength and guidance are as diverse as the peoples of the earth. They are equally diverse in spiritual development. Among them, one finds non-believers, escapists, drug-addicts, agnostics, as well as highly evolved sadhaks, deep Vedic scholars, broad-minded scientists and artistes, poets, pundits, and ordinary simple folk who delight in ancient prescriptions.

Bhagavan accepts them all, welcomes them all, for they are all His children. He is compassionate to the sinner. He comforts and consoles the distressed, and leads the doubter and the confused by the hand into the realm of Light.

His love touches each one, whatever he is, and however he is. But, His touch brings to each an awareness of his own spiritual status and a glimpse of the Goal. One feels glad that one is accepted in spite of one's faults and failings; one's complacence is shaken; one's pride is pricked; one is stirred as never before, to strive for enlightenment.

Bhagavan says: "Bharath is the yogabhumi (the land of yoga, self-control, sense-control, mind-control), tyagabhumi (the land where He who renounces is revered), and the land of personality integration, and the cultivation of spiritual intuition." India has to be again this, so that it might lead mankind into the haven of Peace.

Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba has willed that this consummation must happen; and, so, it shall happen.

7. SAI BABA'S CHALLENGE TO MODERN PSYCHIATRY

DR SAMUEL SANDWEISS

I first met Shri Sathya Sai Baba three and a half years ago. I went to India as a Western psychiatrist to study the psychology of religion at first hand, and left with a deep sense of mystery about a being I could not comprehend. Sai Baba represented a deeply felt challenge to both my personal and professional life. He confronted my basic values and beliefs, the way I viewed and made sense of reality. He troubled the very centre of my existence. As a psychiatrist informed by a belief system which reflected modern psychiatric thought, I saw that Sai Baba represented an imposing challenge to my profession.

What is it that should produce such a reaction in me? The first and most obvious challenge was to my sense of reality, psychiatrist or not. The extraordinary miracles and powers that Sai Baba demonstrates are absolutely contrary to the vision of reality that most of us hold. For many Western scientists who believe the only phenomena worth investigating are those that can be perceived through the senses or measured and evaluated with instruments, to witness Baba's reality, a dimension extending far beyond the senses, is to be cast adrift in absolutely alien waters. It is terribly hard for most to believe that He can materialize objects from thin air, that in fact vibhuti is materializing from a picture of Sai Baba in a home of a devotee in California or Mexico, 12,000 miles away from Him. It is difficult to believe that He is capable of demonstrable clairvoyant, telepathic, and healing powers that include documented cases of miraculous cures of almost all diseases imaginable, including that of bringing back a man from the dead. That He is able to transform Himself into other forms and transport Himself great distances instantaneously, that He has been seen in two or more places at once, and is, in fact, believed to be omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent, absolutely defies the vision of reality that most modern scientists hold and trust.

Our modern scientific vision of reality most frequently includes a lack of belief and faith in a conscious and loving divine order with which we can develop a personal and intimate relationship. Most of us are totally unable to see what the saints and sages throughout the ages have taught—that all creation is a grand, miraculous manifestation of divine will and that God is present in all names and forms. In fact, being labelled an agnostic or atheist in this newest of dark ages is in some distorted way a status symbol, and supposedly reflects one's hold on the clear modern structure of reality.

In modern day psychiatry it is almost as if in the course of our psychiatric training we are confidently educated and indoctrinated into this limited sense of reality. Many psychiatrists try to stay distant from the subject of religion or consider religious principles and practices detrimental to mental health. Perhaps it is just because of this darkness, this narrowing of consciousness, that Sai Baba has come specifically at this time, to boldly demonstrate to the world community the immense reality of spiritual life and give us the faith to direct ourselves toward higher goals.

What more bold demonstration do we need to convince us that the material universe is a manifestation of divine will, a will that permeates and sustains it, than to see vibhuti flowing freely and inexhaustably from Sai Baba's extended palm? In what more concrete way can such a lesson be taught? In a conversation with John Hislop, a devotee from California, Baba spoke of his creative powers in this way: "They belong to the natural unlimited power of God and are in no sense the product of siddhi powers as with yogis or of magic as with magicians. The creative power is in no way contrived or developed, it is natural only. Swami creates some objects the same way He created the universe. Certain other objects are brought from where they were. There are no invisible beings helping swami bring things. His sankalpa, His divine will, brings the object in a moment. He is everywhere."

Even though Sai Baba translates such central truths boldly into concrete experience, psychiatry in general may find it difficult to accept such truth. Even though this science has brought an element of peace and happiness to untold number of lives, one of its glaring weaknesses is the lack of awareness of a spiritual dimension in life and its reluctance to integrate spiritual principles into its body of knowledge. In fact, most psychiatric theory and practice reflects a vision of reality which leaves out almost completely the possibility that our true identity may lie beyond space and time and that we may actually be at our very centre an incorporeal state of pure bliss and love. I know of no concept in modern psychiatry which can be likened to that of atma (soul). Most psychiatrists indeed, identify self with body, emotions, and mind. Sai Baba considers these but the elements of the small self. Psychiatrists frequently take the position that "God is manufactured by man; belief in the higher self is a defense against emotion."

Psychiatrists generally do not believe in a spiritual order of reality beyond the senses and, thus, there naturally follows in their therapeutic objectives an overemphasis on the senses and emotions. Obvious elements of the small self expand in importance and become the framework of worship. This position is absolutely dangerous and in this article I wish to focus on some of its inherent dangers.

First, however, I would like to state clearly that my intention is not to tear down or negate psychiatry. I have great respect for this field which I consider so much a part of me. I feel the work of the loving and caring people in this profession has brought peace to many troubled souls. And even though some psychiatrists may criticize me for painting too bleak a picture, such is not my intention. Rather it is to make more vivid what I see as the primary weakness in modern day psychiatric principles and practices so that they may be more readily scrutinized. I do this out of a desire to be helpful. In fact, I take license to do so from a statement by Sai Baba in the *Prema Vahini*. "The fuel prem (love) yields is the divine name of shanti (peace). . . so prem (love) is to be cultivated. How? By two methods; firstly, consider always the faults of others however big to be insignificant and negiligible. Secondly, consider your faults however insignificant and negligible to be big and feel sad and repentent." It is in this frame of mind, feeling that psychiatry and I are one, that I take liberty in magnifying my faults.

Many of us in the field of psychiatry overvalue emotions. It is well known, however, in the field of spirituality that attachment to feelings leads one deeper into the world of duality and into suffering. Yet many psychiatrists misinterpret monistic spiritual practices such as detachment from emotions, adhering to a self-controlled, disciplined code of morality—which includes surrendering oneself to God—as generally repressive and, in fact, as a pathological denial of one's basic identity. By definition that identity is held to be primarily emotional. Here is where Sai Baba's presence can be a challenge and bring light into the field of psychiatry. Confusion about the place of spirituality, misunderstanding of spiritual attitudes and truths in the field of psychiatry, must be clarified and dealt with. This profession, distinguished for its awareness of the dangers of repressed feelings, must now also come to recognize the dangers of being overly attached to feelings and how such attachment can absolutely curtail spiritual growth.

It is easy for all of us to see the chaos that results when people mistakenly identify themselves with feelings and emotions and indulge themselves in the world of the senses. Such excess is observable in modern day psychiatry in a number of ways, including in the personal lives of psychiatrists themselves. As I suggested earlier, in some strange way psychiatrists are practically trained to become agnostics or atheists. Perhaps this irreligious posture and its consequent feeling of profound emptiness may be related to the unusually high suicide rate among psychiatrists and the depressions, marital difficulties, and divorces common in the group. Frequently also, one witnesses in the profession cultivation of faddish, unusual, and in some cases absolutely bizarre ideas and theories, that seem to defy reason and the most obvious common sense.

And what of the patient? Frequently he, too, begins to worship emotional expression. I have seen more than one patient become involved in sensitivity groups and other psychotherapeutic modalities and soon arrive at the notion that it is important to live more than ever before in the feeling and sense world. A woman might well return from such sessions to her husband who has been working eight or ten hours a day and properly call him stuffy and old-fashioned (since he cannot keep pace with her adventuresome new-self) and declare that she will not be tied down to the four children and the household duties any more. "I'm going out with the leader of the group," one wife told her husband, and before she knew it, she was having an affair with the group leader and shortly was divorced. The break up of the family unit and the pain and emptiness that results in the lives of the young children are traumas that absolutely weaken our society yet seem to automatically continue unchecked by it.

There is a segment in society whose central moral principle is "let it all hang out," and "do what you want to do." When I first heard Sai Baba say "it is not so important to do what you want to do, but to learn to like to do what you have to do," I was initially startled because it seemed to strike at some of my own unquestioned beliefs. How far afield I was to feel challenged by such a truth; how far afield is much of American society, and a large portion of the psychiatric community.

Psychiatry has a responsibility to society as a whole. For many in our society it has become almost a religion, and, quite generally, psychiatric principles have become a moral code. There is a great danger here. Certain psychiatric attitudes, useful in a limited therapeutic situation, are mistakenly accepted as a moral code by which one should lead one's life. For instance, in the therapeutic situation the psychiatrist may curtail his moral and value judgments in order to create an environment of almost total permissiveness so that the patient may be allowed to get in better touch with and express repressed feelings, needs, and desires. Up to a point, this may be essential in the therapeutic situation, but such permissiveness and over-indulgence in emotions is extremely dangerous when adopted as a way of life in society in general. There is certainly no lack of evidence demonstrating how such self-indulgence in desires has led to social chaos. Distorted morality, rampant in society, has already led to an absurd testing out in action of almost every fantasy and desire related to sexuality, promiscuity, pornography, assertiveness, aggressiveness, and violence.

The world today appears to hover on the brink of insanity. As much as half its population may be starving. We are witness to shootings in the streets, suicides, and terrorist attacks on a daily basis. The most grotesque inhumanities and a virtual rape of the land are practiced by us almost as a way of life. We are caught up in an absurd infatuation with weaponry and war and a preoccupation with ourselves. Instead of becoming masters of ourselves so as to create order and facilitate humanity's evolution of consciousness, we are becoming slaves to our emotional and mental energies, driven every which way in our craving for sensual gratification. Psychiatry, I am convinced, must accept more responsibility for this disturbing situation.

Although most psychiatrists would say that such a distorted generalization of psychiatric principles by laymen is a gross misunderstanding of psychiatric attitudes, I feel that psychiatry has contributed to the distortion in that it basically does not believe in a spiritual dimension of reality beyond the senses and as a result, promotes an overvaluing of the senses and emotions. Psychiatry must develop a deeper sense of responsibility in this matter and help establish a clearly defined moral code and proper modes of conduct if society and the human being are to survive. Moral and spiritual concepts which require directing our lives with discipline and a sense of responsibility and the importance of surrendering our selfish wants and desires in order to attain higher goals for ourselves and for the welfare of others must be voiced clearly and loudly by the field of psychiatry. Too many psychiatrists have for too long a time hidden behind the mask of the non-judgmental observer.

Sai Baba challenges an egotistical attitude that many of us psychiatrists developed—a belief that we can actually understand human nature and cure people by ourselves. This is a challenge to the distorted belief that the small self is the doer and to the illusion of identifying the self with the mind. For instance, early in my psychiatric training I was struck by how cerebral and overly intellectual many psychoanalysts were in their writings and in meetings, as if they thought they could understand and define human nature with concepts and mechanisms as one would an automobile. Even early in my education I questioned this reliance on the mind's ability to know. However, many analysts give it a good try. And I remember with regret how tiresome and fruitless it was for me to wade through great reams of arrid professional reading material. I found myself instead seeking out other writings about mystics, Zen Buddhism, and spiritual doctrines in which one found again and again the firm assertion that higher levels of reality simply could not be comprehended by the mind, doctrines in which the mind was considered an obstacle to be overcome and transcended in order for one to see more deeply into his true nature. My attraction to such Eastern concepts as atma (the real self or soul, one's divinity: imperishable, immutable, infinite, eternal) and moksha (liberation from delusion, release from the circle of births and deaths), reflected my hope and intuitive feeling that the self extended beyond the mind, our real nature extended outside of space and time.

A comparison of the psychoanalytic process of free association (that technique used in psychoanalysis whereby the patient expresses everything that comes to mind without censoring anything) with the practice of meditation, originating in the East, points out in a concrete way the differences between East and West in attitudes and approaches toward mind and self. The aim of both of these processes is towards realizing our deepest inner nature, and a central element in each is our becoming aware of being an observer and witness — but for different reasons.

In free-association one becomes the observer as a means to an end, in order to watch thoughts and emotions as they bubble up into awareness. The assumption is that these thoughts and feelings are valuable because they eventually lead to underlying conflicts which, when found, can be resolved; therefore one is directed to attend to and follow them. Meditation on the other hand, simply being aware of one's self as witness, may be an end in itself. The experience of being centred or focused in full awareness in the here and now may lead us into a deeper experience of our true nature. Meditation is supposed to take us beyond the mind to the point where we can watch passing thoughts and feelings without being seduced into attending to and following them.

If the mind is to be used at all it is to be directed by the will of the observer to create an inner spiritual experience, such as that which evokes a sense of awe in the presence of creation, or an all-encompassing sense of love and peace. This can be done by mentally repeating the name of God, trying to visualize light, or any number of techniques. These experiences tend to tame the mind, encouraging in one the experience of divinity believed to lie at the centre of our identity. By staying in touch with one's self as witness and with an aspect of the divine,one may eventually reach the place where witnesser and witnessed, the "I" and the "that" merge and become one. At this point the profound sense of the great Eastern phrase "Tat twam asi" may be finally realized and one enters the peace and calm that defies understanding. By contrast, if one is free-associating on an analyst's couch and drops into a place of great peace and quiet, this may be interpreted as resistence to the flow of material, and the individual is encouraged back into following his thoughts and feelings.

Baba has said, "The scientist looks outside and is always saying, 'What is this?'(This which can be perceived by the senses; existing in the world of emotions or grasped by the mind). But the saint is always looking inside and his question is, 'What is that?' (That which is beyond the senses, beyond emotions, beyond the grasp of the mind)."

This identification of self with mind and the value placed on the mind by the Western psychiatrists leads to an egoistic attitude about his place in the process of therapy. His assumed ability to fully understand human nature and cure people is a form of illusion and a source of disorder. Baba's presence absolutely challenges the position. Just witnessing His reality, which reaches beyond anything our level of consciousness can comprehend or grasp, is enough to humble one, to force one to acknowledge how much we do not know. Instead of ego one is left with a sense of awe and mystery toward creation, and a devotional attitude toward God, recognizing that God is in fact the doer.

A mentality is developing in America in general, and in the field of psychiatry, which looks toward quick methods and instant cure-alls, toward the possibility that one can rise overnight into a state of samadhi by practicing a certain mystical technique or magic method. I have seen too many new theories and practices originated daily in psychiatry, their wild claims supporting absolutely contrary and differing theories and practices. We continue to keep on hoping for the magic cure and grasping for impossibilities.

It is indeed refreshing to witness Sai Baba's challenge to this absurd situation. He does not promise that the way will be quick and easy and without pain. Rather he teaches what we all know somewhere deep down in our souls to be true: that we must develop patience, perseverance, and steadiness. "The slow and the steady win the race." It is indeed refreshing and encouraging that Sai Baba teaches an age-old truth about right living, duty, and discipline. The moral system he advocates has been taught throughout the ages by saints and sages and is, indeed, timeless. It is as it always has been. This characteristic of the teaching itself reflects its truth; the teachings are always the same. And even though we may be attracted momentarily to the promises of overnight cures, and to the flashy style and rhetoric of lesser personalities, we must inevitably realize that Sai Baba's teachings that spiritual growth may indeed require hard work and suffering are, in fact, the *Way*. In a discourse in *Sanathan Sarathi* in August 1974 (p. 185) Baba has said:

> Do you think that I would confront you with pain were there not a reason for it? Open your heart to pain as you do now for pleasure. For it is My will wrought by Me for your good. Welcome it as a challenge, do not turn away from it. Turn within and derive the strength to bear it and benefit by it. Do not listen to your mind for the mind is but another word for 'need'. . . .it is all My plan to drive you by the pangs of unfulfilled need to listen to My voice that when heard dissolves the ego and the mind with it . . . it is like baking a cake, I stir, I pound, I twist, I bake. I drown you in tears; I scorch you with sobs. I make you sweet and crisp, an offering worthy of God. I have come to reform you. My plan is to transmute you into a successful sadhak. I won't leave you until I do that. Even if you stray away before that, I will hold onto you. You cannot escape me.

Then there is Sai Baba's message of love. Here we find perhaps his greatest power, and most profound gift to us. He says, "Start the day with love, fill the day with love, end the day with love, that is the way to God." Then he demonstrates this central most profound teaching, by living it in his life. "My life is My message," He says, and His life is indeed a miraculous expression of a constant and never ending stream of love, taking form in the gentleness, kindness, and protectiveness He extends to all. Baba assures us that at our centre we are, in fact, pure bliss and love: the very same qualities we see in him constantly.

Witnessing and experiencing such love was a major turning point in my life. It was apparent to me during my first visit with Baba that modern day psychiatry is grossly limited in understanding and comprehending this kind of love. The love that I witnessed in Sai Baba extended beyond the concepts of psychiatry. For psychiatrists who believe that human nature is basically animalistic at its centre, motivated at its core by the pleasure-pain principle and the need for some form of self gratification, Baba's kind of selfless love is an impressive revelation. For in Sai Baba we find that clearest statement that at our centre we are love. Love in fact in its pure form may have been best defined in spiritual terms as the divine spark at our very centre; the essence of our identity, the manifestation of our truest nature which like consciousness may reach out and expand until it embraces all.

After my initial visit with Sai Baba I began to experience an inner awakening as if a once familiar, but closed off, centre was opening up and I was becoming reacquainted with a part of myself that I had long ago forgotten. I identified the experience as one of devotion and began to wonder whether such a centre lies dormant in all of us, awaiting release through some personal spiritual experience. This awakening or unfolding was for me a source of great joy, and with it came a deepening feeling of my love for Baba and for people in general. I wondered at this time if I were witnessing something about the dynamics of love which had not been accessible to me in the field of psychiatry. I have since become aware that this inner experience of devotion toward God which springs up in the heart of the spiritual aspirant is the most central force in his life, a source of his deepest sense of meaning, giving rise to the most profound experience of love.

In a message to American devotees in 1972, Baba describes the mechanism by which one merges with the universal absolute. He writes, "You as body, mind or soul are a dream, but what you really are is existence, knowledge, bliss. You are the God of this universe. You are creating the whole universe and drawing it in. To gain the infinite universal individuality, the miserable little prison individuality must go. Bhakti (devotion) is no crying or any negative condition. It is the seeing of all in all we see. It is the heart that reaches the goal. A pure heart seeks beyond the intellect. It gets inspired." Here Baba points out a central spiritual truth about the significance of devotion, so necessary if love is to unfold, a truth that modern psychiatry grossly misunderstands, the significance of which it is almost entirely ignorant. Sai Baba's presence surely confronts and confounds this ignorance.

Sai Baba's basic challenge to the Western behavioural scientist is the same as his challenge to everyone, everywhere. It is a challenge to the darkness. He is here to bring light into our lives. His mission is to turn the behavioural scientists, as well as all people of the world into spiritual aspirants who recognize the reality of God so that the aspirants' work reflects man's deepest yearning to realize God. In response to Sai Baba's personal challenge, I believe that the field of psychiatry will become spiritualized. Psychiatrists will become aware that the ultimate goal in psychiatry is actually the same as that of religion: to find the God or atma within and to find it through the experience of love. Reflecting my own yearning that psychiatry awaken to Sai Baba's reality, I would prefer calling psychiatry "*Sai*-chiatry," the *Sai*-chiatry of Atma consciousness, the *Sai*-chiatry of love.

8. RELIGION AND MARX, FREUD AND "I"

DR B. S. GOEL

There are two aspects of life, namely, values and quality of life which are deeply interconnected, but have been seen and interpreted differently by thinkers all over the world. There are those who find no connection among these two aspects. No wonder, while they uphold one aspect vehemently, they also condemn the other violently. The thinkers who do so include the two world celebrated figures of Marx and Freud also.

It is proposed to discuss the two aspects of life in the light of the theory of psycho-analytical meditation in this paper. It will be our endeavour to understand the connection among the above mentioned three aspects of life, and further, how and where Marx and Freud have gone wrong in seeing them differently.

Understanding Man

It is essential at the outset to review briefly the idea of man which Marx and Freud conceived as against the idea of man which I have expanded in my *First Book of Experiences* on the basis of my long experience of psychoanalysis and meditation. Marx, to be sure, pays less attention to the individual as a unit of study than to the group and society. However, it is not possible to study a group or society without the individual.

As such, we have numerous references in the writings of Marx which give a clue to his idea of the individual. It is very obvious from a study of such references that while he has talked about consciousness and group consciousness a great deal, he had no idea of Cosmic Consciousness which is the source of all creation.

Further, he could not visualize that individual consciousness is a part of Cosmic Consciousness. Group consciousness has no existence in essense. It is only the individual consciousness of a large number of people which is conditioned by certain identical factors applicable to most of them. For him, individual consciousness is not an indestructible phenomenon. It is created in the individual by the group, and it gets destroyed by inevitable death.

Ideas, values, beliefs, attitudes — all are created or incorporated in him by the group. The individual, because of those ideas and values which are created in him by a particular group and which owe a lot to the economic conditions of that group, becomes class conscious and behaves in a particular way. Thus economic reasons are largely responsible for values. Marx extends his understanding of society and class conflict to the exploiting classes not only to create the fear of the unknown, but also to lull the masses into inaction. It is used to weaken their attitudes of antagonism towards class war. No wonder he condemns religion as the opium of the people.

Thus, two things are obvious. Firstly, hunger and the economic condition of a group form the base of this thinking. Further, these two things determine the state of violence. This violence would lead to revolution and the overthrow of the exploiting class. That will in turn bring a change in the quality of life. Secondly, religion is an opinion incorporated deliberately in the masses to weaken them. Thus, belief in religion or God is anti-people and harmful.

Freud's Understanding

Freud's understanding of man is at the individualistic rather than the group level, although as both are interconnected, reference to groups is often made in his writings.

Freud starts with the birth of the individual, and stresses the importance of the desire of object, love, and sex, as well as its denial in the growth of the individual. To be sure, he also had no idea of the indestructible consciousness as part of the Cosmic Consciousness which is the source of all creation.

The denial of love — object, sex hunger and love need, creates frustration, bitterness, violence, and hatred in the child. Naturally, in the Freudian scheme of things, after object, sex, love hunger and such items as vouyerism, pleasure, and lust connected with them, come such phenomena as hate, violence, jealousy, etc. Both the categories of items are closely interconnected.

However, the process of socialization and the moral structure of the society soon start condemning these phenomena, punishing the child for being that and creating guilt in him for being what he is.

Not only this. In order to make the child fit in with society, society creates in him new moral values. These values often impart a new self-image (new face) to the individual and quite often it is placed in opposition to the first and more real face of the child.

These values suppress the natural wishes, urges and hungers of the individual thus blocking his psychic freedom. This leads to all kinds of unhappiness and emotional trouble. Freud often describes cultural values incorporated in the individual as the enemy of the individual's happiness and the root cause of mental disturbance.

Religion, and religious values are also incorporated in the individual, according to Freud, for the same reason. The animal nature of the child with such needs as pleasure, lust, anger, and violence is considered wrong. Religion is incorporated in him to make him "good". Thus religion is also an instrument to put a new face on the individual which is in opposition to his more natural, animal-like formation. No wonder, religion suppresses the natural hunger, and psychic freedom of the individual and thus causes mental trouble. Freud was very emphatic in his views when he described religion as the "universal neurosis" of mankind.

Marx and Freud

This brief exposition shows that while there were a number of dissimilarities between Marx and Freud, there were a few similarities also.

Among the dissimilarities, we notice that Marx was more concerned with the group while Freud was more concerned with the individual. Secondly, Marx made physical hunger the base of his philosophy while Freud made object-need and love hunger as the base of his understanding. Marx felt that economic hunger, and other factors on the one hand and their deprivation on the other, condition thinking, attitudes etc., while Freud felt that security, sex need and object need on the one hand and their denial on the other determine these attitudes largely. Marx wishes that the aggression generated out of denial should be utilised to overthrow the "denier" or exploiting classes. Freud feels that behind this aggression one should see his or her desires of object need and sex need and accept them emotionally to feel more happy.

The similarities in thinking are not many. But a striking similarity is found in their views on religion and values incorporated in the people through it. Both feel that religion is something which is incorporated from outside and it is done deliberately—for Marx, it is practised to lessen the hatred against the exploiting classes, and for Freud, it is practised to suppress the libidinal forces. For Marx, religion is an enemy of group freedom and happiness. For Freud, it is an enemy of individual freedom and happiness. It also follows logically that religion or God are creations of the imagination and are not real in any way.

Psycho-Analytical Meditational Theory

It is quite obvious that Marx and Freud both had an idea of two stages of the individual—the animal-universality stage and the super-ego inspired stage of values. While Marx, for obvious reasons, could not articulate it in psychological terms, Freud openly expressed it. However, for both of them religion and values existed at the super-ego inspired stage, or the stage which is created in the individual deliberately by the society, or the ruling classes in their own interest.

If we limit ourselves to these two stages alone, I do not think we can find much fault with Marxist or Freudian thinking about religion and values being incorporated by fear, and being perpetuated by fear. Fear and individual or group happiness cannot go hand in hand. People talk of religion and values out of fear. They pose to be religious and good out of fear while they have all the hungers and cravings of the animal-universality stage. They want exclusive possession, they are selfish, they are jealous, violent etc., but they talk of God and values because of fear.

I haveno doubt in my mind that religion and values incorporated through indoctrination and assimilated through the senses trouble. They lead to hypocrisy, make the individual useless and are indeed an "opium of the people" or a "universal neurosis of mankind". Since most people in the world practise this religion and these values, they are bound to suffer. Religion for them is a cause of deception and suffering and it will remain so!

Marx says, "Religion is the opium of the masses." When I observe the Indian situation today, I find that Marxism and socialism are the opium of the people. Many people do nothing but feel that Marxism would solve their problems. A Marx would say that it is not the fault of Marxism. It is the fault of those who interpret it wrongly and understand it wrongly. Similarly, I must say that religion is not an opium; it is the fault of those (like Marx) who understand it wrongly.

On the basis of my long experiences of psycho-analysis and meditation, I must say that Freud's and Marx's understanding about man was limited. A Lord Krishna would come, Buddha would come, Mohammad would come, Christ would come and they would shake the foundations of such philosophies in a matter of days. People would again flock around them, and bring faith in God, religion and various noble values. Thus God, religion and values live eternally. Why is it so? Can God, religion, and values be just bunkum?

They are indeed not bunkum. It is only the understanding of Marx and Freud which is defective and this is precisely because they took a very limited view of life and stumbled in understanding the true nature of religion. They made a mistake in understanding the real roots of values! Let us make an attempt to understand their roots through this psycho-analytical meditational theory.

The Roots

There are three stages of "self" according to this theory. The individual consciousness, which is part of the cosmic consciousness remains at either of these three selves. At the first-stage "self", it is a pure energy state, a universal spirituality state. At the second-stage, it is the animal universality state—the animal reactions of hate, jealousy, greed, lust, etc. emerge here. Now this state is suppressed by society through fear and punishment. It becomes the unconscious and sub-conscious of man as described by Freud.

Now, new values and religion are incorporated in man to make him something better. Here develops the third-stage "self" of man which is his individuality. At this stage, the individual looks moral, and talks of values and religion which indeed cause unhappiness.

There are three interesting questions which arise here. Where did the values and religion come from? Why does the society try to incorporate them in the human child? Will such values and religion always act as a source of unhappiness?

Religion and values originate when an individual comes to the first stage "Self" again through meditation and psycho-analysis. This is a grand backward journey of the consciousness toward its source, that is, cosmic consciousness. In this journey, the consciousness first discards the third-stage "self", which it became out of fear and numerous identifications. Naturally, it also discards the values and religion which were incorporated in the individual through indoctrination. No wonder, during the early stages of psychoanalysis and meditation, one would repudiate all values, morality and religion. One would clearly see that one is not "That" —those things were only incorporated in him by others. They represent his "non-self."

From that third-stage "self", one would come to the second-stage "self". One would re-experience and revisualize one's animal nature—jealousy, violence, murderous ideas, lust, self-hate, self-dislike and hundred of other things. This is experiencing the "unconscious" as given by Freud. But slowly and steadily, one would transcend this stage also. One would transcend the most deep-rooted desires of object-attachment, and violence if the object is denied. One may renounce these desires as also the pain and pride born out of these desires. Thus one reaches the first-stage "self". This is a stage when all hate, attachment, desire for possession, etc. vanish.

When one reaches the first-stage, the individual consciousness lives in the organism (body of the individual), but it is no longer a victim of any desires, fears, doubts. It is free from them. At this moment, it gets a contact with the cosmic consciousness, or Master Spirit. The moment this contact is established, tremendous spiritual energy flows in the system. Love, happiness and freedom are the attributes of this state.

It is at this stage that values and religion emerge. Love for all, fearlessness, compassion, sacrifice, goodness, truth—they all emerge automatically at the stage. One noticed in one's own life that when one has an upsurge of love feelings and feels a state of happiness, one becomes good, one can sacrifice something at that moment, so on and so forth. One can well imagine that when one achieves this stage in absolute terms, that is without any trace of hate, pride or jealousy, how these values would flow. They flow automatically.

It is a state of perfect religion, a state where, because of the contact of the individual consciousness with the supreme consciousness one can say, "I am God, or I am the son of God, or I am the 'Self'. This is living religion. Lord Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Mohammad, all lived at this first stage. Their followers may say anything out of ignorance, but they experienced the same state and preached the same values and religion. All religions in their origin are identical. They look different and even antagonistic because of language and their ignorant followers.

Thus, religion and values are real and true and their roots lie in the contact of the individual consciousness with the supreme consciousness.

What is the test of such a stage? When may we say in relation to values that we have reached the first-stage "Self"?

It will be noticed that when we follow values at the third-stage "self", we follow them with certain desires, expectations and ideas of certain "returns". Suppose, we sympathise with the poor. We follow this value of sympathy so that people praise us and appreciate us. (Many Marxists live on this weakness alone.) If we sacrifice something we wish that people should praise us and shower flowers on us.

As long as these desires, expectations and ideas of "returns" are there while following "values", take it for granted that they are being followed at the third-stage "self". They are not real and spontaneous. They are fake and born out of fear.

When these expectations of "returns" vanish completely, only then we follow real values. Those are actions done in the path of God. We only act as instruments. Only those actions are recognised as Godly actions.

There is a small story in Indian mythology which explains the point. A rich man used to give a lot of alms to the poor. When he died and was presented before God, it was ordered that he should be sent to hell but shown heaven for a moment. He pleaded that he had given a lot of alms to beggars and poor people, so he did not deserve hell. He was told that he had given all those alms to gain prestige in society. Only once he gave a piece of bread to a dog without that desire of "gain". That was the only Godly action he did in his life and for that action alone, he was being shown heaven. Otherwise he could have been sent to hell straight away. The moral of the story in relation to values is obvious.

Suppression and Transcendence

The difference between what Marx and Freud say and what I say about religion should be very clear by now. When they condemn religion and values connected with it, they understand the religion and values which are practised at the third-stage "self". Such religion and those values are incorporated in the individual through fear and punishment, and this is done by suppressing the second-stage "self," and they cause neurosis.

However, this does not mean that they are in such origin. If we reach that religion and those values by transcending the second-stage "Self", that is, the animal-universality stage, we experience that religion and values are eternal realities. Not only are they realities, they are the roots of every good, true, and beautiful action.

Thus, Freud and Marx condemned religion because of their limited understanding of man, otherwise, religion and values are indeed true. The condition is that they must be experienced by transcending the second-stage "self" — that is the animal-universality, rather than by suppressing it.

Why Society Teaches Values and Religion

After seeing the true roots of religion and values which lie in the contact of the individual consciousness with the supreme consciousness, the question arises: Why does society compulsively teach religion and values to the young?

An answer to this question is not difficult at all. When a great saint or Godman appears on the social scene, he lives these values and religion so really that lakhs of people flock around Him.

They see in Him an image which consoles them and promises them eternal peace. He kindles their faith in values and God. He is a true religious person, and his personality infuses religion and faith in men. Christ was not a great man in the worldly or material sense. He never wore attractive clothes. He was no propagandist. Yet lots of people flocked around him. He was a Godman, a messenger of God who came on this earth to preach values and religion. Buddha was a great man in the worldly sense, being the son of a king. However, he became greater, and is remembered only for that reason, when he become a Godman and lived these values and religion in the real sense.

The masses see such Godman, and wonder. They see these values in them. They see something of religion and God in them. They understand the meaning of all-powerful God through them.

This gives them an idea of religion and God. Being ordinary wordly people, they cannot practise meditation for long years to realize those values and religion in their lives. But they do take it on themselves to preach and propagate these things to others. They have indeed a super-ego compulsion to preach these things to the young. Thus there is a very sound reason for society to preach religion and values. I preached Marxism to others when as a young enthusiast I first learnt it. I also preached psychoanalytical philosophy when I started undergoing psychoanalysis. This was indeed done because of identifications and a super-ego compulsion on my part. Society does the same thing in relation to religion.

When society preaches religion and values and incorporates them in the mind of the individual, it is done by condemning the second-stage "self" of the child. Thus a third-stage "self" originates. At this third-stage, this religion and the values connected with it create suffering for man. The reason is that the second-stage "self" is more universal and more powerful than this third-stage "self." It often sabotages this "superficial" third-stage "self." Thus a constant neurosis results. Only occasionally this incorporated religion becomes helpful. When a man suffers this neurosis and searches for happiness, he may come on the path of the backward journey through meditation or psychoanalytical meditation. This incorporated knowledge can indeed provide an incentive for this backward journey. In that case, it may be of positive help.

Thus, we come to answer the third question, that is, whether religion is always a source of pain. The answer is "No." It is a source of greatest happiness and good if it is lived at the first-stage "self," and not at the third-stage "self."

Dialectics

A reference should be made about "dialectics" also. Marx has given materialistic dialectics which appears to be true. The principle of negation for a further synthesis and expansion till the ad infinitum stage is reached is good. But has this stage of ad infinitum ever come in the material world? Material world is also a creation of cosmic power and cosmic energy. The ad infinitum stage can come only in the source, that is the cosmic energy and not the material world which is a mere manifestation of cosmic energy. To take an analogy, water is the source of ice. If dialectics are applied to ice, there cannot be any stage of ad infinitum. A stage of ad infinitum can only be in relation to water.

Similarly, there cannot be any stage of ad infinitum in the material world. Marx's dialectics are true logically. But in results and prediction, they will always fail.

Now, let us return to the psychoanalytical-meditational theory to understand the true nature of dialectics.

The growth of the individual in society is seen as an expansion of the personality of the individual by western psychologists. I do not want to contradict it as I visualize clearly why it is so. But let us take an analogy. A drop of water gets separated from the ocean. This drop is a tiny one. Now this drop is surrounded by certain walls of a certain utensil. It has assumed individuality and can feel itself as big as the utensil. If it is transferred to a bigger utensil, it may pose to be bigger!

However, this expansion is fake. The drop is only a slave of the utencil. It has got reduced permanently in size. Its eternal search is to merge back with the ocean, to realize its full expansion.

The idea of western psychologists about the enlargement and expansion of personality is similar. The individual consciousness is a part of the cosmic consciousness. It has entered the individual body. Certain things are put into his mind through senses. The individual consciousness, like drop of water, becomes a slave of those ideas etc. (utensil) and feels itself to be that. More information, more ideas and identifications are put (the size of the utensil is increased), it feels to have grown. This process of growth is described as the expansion of personality! Is it not obvious that this growth is fake?

It is a description of great ignorance. The reality is that the individual consciousness is going away from the source, getting reduced in size, and becoming a slave of a bigger and bigger ego (utensil). Who likes the size of this ego? Neither the individual consciousness likes it (as it is its slave) nor other persons like it as ego is a dislikable quantity. The individual consciousness becomes a victim of ignorance preached by society. Western psychology has based its own edifice on that ignorance and calls itself a science which leads to truth. How is it possible?

The individual consciousness wants to be free from this ego, it searches its source eternally to realize the meaning of expansion and growth. This it can do through dialectics — not through the material dialectics of Marx (or ego-dialectics of western psychologists) but through the dialectics of spirit or soul. Try to understand here the meaning of ad infinitum also.

You are good at the third-stage "self." This idea of goodness was created in you by society. Your individual consciousness associated itself with it out of fear. This was put into your mind by outside forces. This is not you. So leave it and negate it. You will experience your "badness" of second-stage "self." Live it consciously and negate it also. The goodness will re-emerge with a great force and in multiplied form. There are thousands of ideas connected with this goodness at the third-stage "self." Negate all of them. Their opposites at the second-stage "self" will emerge in a magnified form.

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Take another example. You feel you are fearless at the third-stage "self". This idea of fearlessness was incorporated in you by condemning your fear in various situations. Now feel that you are fearless. Be sure that this idea was put in your mind from outside. This is not you. Discard it and negate it. You will experience your fears of the second-stage "self." Believe them and re-visualize them. Now negate them also. The fearlessness will re-emerge in multiplied form. There are numerous such ideas of fearlessness in the third-stage "self." Negate all of them. Their opposites at the second-stage "self" would emerge. Leave them and negate them. The fearlessness would re-emerge in a magnified form. This is the only meaning of dialectics which lead to ad infinitum.

These dialectics become very visible during the "backward journey" as explained earlier in this article. The process continues till the individual consciousness reaches the source, that is, the cosmic consciousness. Here "goodness" achieves the point of ad-infinitum. Beauty becomes ad infinitum. Truth becomes ad-infinitum. Bliss becomes ad infinitum. Fearlessness becomes ad-infinitum. Greatness becomes ad infinitum.

And incidentally, this is the only real and true expansion of personality. The Western psychologists would do well to leave their laboratories and attend to it to understand the meaning of expansion of personality. Here, one does not remain individual, one becomes universal.

Quality of Life

Before finishing this article, I want to bring you back to the beginning of it again. I mentioned there that, religion, values, and the quality of life are closely interconnected. At the first stage, the true experience of religion take place. At this stage, the true meanings of values are realized. At this very stage, one truly lives a life of good quality.

Quality of life does not mean a standard of high material living. It does not mean numerous material possessions. It also does not mean civilized and polite talk of idealism without the backing of spontaneous actions proving that talk. Quality of life is something which appeals to the mind instantly. It appeals to the mind instantly because it reflects numerous values which one experiences at the first-stage "self." Love, sacrifice, compassion, service, fearlessness, freedom, detachment, etc. are values which instantly capture the mind. The observer instantly says, "Here is a person who is different from others. His company provides solace and a sense of elation."

The quality of life and desires of an individual are at variance. The more the desires, the poorer will be the quality of life. The fewer the desires, the better the quality of life. More desires emerge out of inferiority, deprivation and dissatisfaction, plus a wrong understanding of the meaning of life. More desires sharpen greed, lust, jealousy, and other negative qualities which lower the quality of life.

This quality of life, as has been stated already, is the result of real experiences at the first-stage. It is an attribute of real "religious" experience plus the values connected with that experience.

Education

The eternal educational and social question is: Can these values be taught? Can quality of life be imparted? Teachers, preachers, and other social reformers are all engaged in this pursuit.

A straight answer is perhaps neither feasible nor desirable. If at all I am forced to give one, the greater emphasis in my answer will be on a straight "No." Values and quality of life cannot be taught. We have been trying to teach them throughout the ages through the various systems of education. We have never succeeded. None can say if the present day quality of life is better than what it was a hundred years ago or a thousand years ago. Indeed, we can be more certain about saying that we have not been able to bring about a better man or better world.

The teaching of values through formal education has the same danger which I have referred to again and again. It will impliedly condemn the second-stage "self" or the animal-universality stage of the person. He would suppress that "self-image" and develop the third-stage "self" or the individuality. This will lead to neurosis, suffering etc. Education leads to alienation by increasing the distance of the man from himself. Education is an instrument of alienation and suffering in the modern world.

In brief, the quality of life cannot be taught.

However, there is a small modification here. If the teachers are such who live this quality of life (as there used to be in ancient India), the young can imbibe some part of those qualities. It must be noted that there should be no attempt to teach quality of life. As soon as there is "teaching" of this quality, teaching degenerates into a sort of "castration" and "persecution." It invariably means condemnation of the second-stage "self" which leads to its suppression and consequent unhappiness.

Evolution

Thus, by and large, quality of life cannot be taught. However, it can be evolved if the individual wishes so. The technique is the same, that is, a slow and regular backward journey through psycho-analytical meditation. It is only through this technique that one can transcend the second-stage "self" while going towards the first-stage. Only the transcendence of this stage and not its suppression (all formal education suppresses it) will lead to real values and quality of life.

Formal education, if it seriously intends to bring about "quality of life," should introduce the practice of psychoanalytical meditation for about forty minutes a day for each student. That alone will slowly and steadily lead to a good quality of life and a better world.

Incidentally, that will also efface Marxist and Freudian thought as the first is based on ignorance, and the second is based on partial truth about man.

9. GODMEN AND THEIR CRITICS

DR B. S. GOEL

There are numerous people all over the world who take critical intellectual interest in the living Godmen and their activities. Many of these are simply fascinated by the Godmen. Their search and curiosity often take them to these Godmen who often leave them in a state of bewilderment and surprise by their spiritual contact as well as by their curious miracles. There are many other intellectuals who are not impressed by these Godmen. They are their outright critics and often call their miracles as tricks.

Agehananda Bharati, an Austria born monk and an old convert to Hinduism, who is at present a Professor of Anthropology at Syracuse University, New York, is one such critic who indeed represents the thinking of this tribe of critics to a great extent. Well read, sharp and witty, he appears to have a lot of knowledge of religions and a good capacity to marshal quotations, arguments and to express his doubts and criticism about Godmen in a popular style. He, as also some of the other intellectuals, have written a great deal in various Indian newspapers and periodicals to criticise the Godmen and their activities.

What are the major doubts and criticism of these intellectuals, especially Agehananda Bharati, about Godmen? Is their any substance in them?

From their writings we may take the following main points in order to discuss them and seek their answers: (*i*) Is human nature the same everywhere? If so, what is the basic substratum of it? Are all religions one in their basic essence? How do we rate the Gita, Bible, Quran and other religious books? (*ii*) Are miracles a reality? If so, what is their secret and purpose? (*iii*) Are Godmen really "phoney"? Why don't they discuss many things with other scientists and disclose their tools and primary sources? (*iv*) Is meditation an anti-intellectual activity? Do the ideas of Soul and God originate from easiness and laziness? (*v*) Do the current religious-cum-meditational movements represent a genuine culture?

Man is a psycho-physical organism when he is born. There are two needs felt by him. One is security and the other fulfilment of hunger. The infant also brings with him another thing. This is called consciousness, which imparts the vital energy to it. If we observe consciousness working in the newly born infant, we see the playful energy. This energy is at the command of his consciousness.

But what are the sources of this consciousness and energy? The individual consciousness in the infant is a very small part of the Supreme or Cosmic Consciousness, and this energy in him is a very small part of the Cosmic Energy. This small consciousness emerges from the Supreme Consciousness and comes into the body of the infant, as a small drop of water merges from the ocean and comes into a pitcher. The need of this individual consciousness is to leave the body and merge back with the Supreme Consciousness or get contact with it in order to realize itself. It is indeed not the drop but the ocean itself!

So there are three needs of the infant — two are purely physical, that of security and hunger, and the third is of the spirit, that is, of the individual consciousness seeking to merge with the Supreme Consciousness.

It may incidentally be mentioned here that there would be only three kinds of popular philosophy in the world. They would be based on these three basic human needs; that is of hunger, of security and of spirit. The first two would always remain destructible and convertible as they belong to the destructible part of the human organism. The third philosophy would always remain indestructible, as it belongs to the indestructible consciousness.

Now let us proceed further with the growth of the infant. From the moment of birth, the sense organs of the child start working and the infant starts interacting with the society. Numerous animal reactions (many of which are *sui generis*), sensations, and desires emerge at this stage. For example, greed, possession, attachment, jealousy, anger, sucking, licking etc. all emerge here. These are universal phenomena.

This animal universality of man invites various reactions of the society (mostly family) around the infant. These reactions are of both kinds—positive, that is, of love, appreciation, hugging, as also of the negative character, that is rejection, denial, punishment, beating, pushing back, ridicule, humiliation etc. The positive reactions of the society create pleasure and negative reactions create insecurity and pain. The first thought in the child is how to remove insecurity and pain and get continuous pleasure.

In social reactions, it may be pointed out, the mother contact is the most important reaction, as it tends to fulfill all the three original needs, physical hunger and security on the one hand, and spiritual need on the other by a partial merger of one individual consciousness with another individual consciousness. The last need is fulfilled in a very minor way. Thus the contact need and flesh need with an affectionate mother-object become most deeply rooted in the psyche. In meditation, the mother contact (the guru-contact and analyst's contact are equivalents) is transcended.

Social reactions create numerous fears, doubts, and convictions in the child. For example, fear of separation, fear of expressing hatred and jealousy, fear of retaliation etc. are all born here. The growing child forms his own understanding about everything. He feels that he is not getting his original needs fulfilled because of certain defects in him. Punishment, ridicule, condemnation etc. often create insecurity in him which convince him that his needs and desires are wrong! He is punished and condemned because he is a vouyerist, an exhibitionist, jealous, violent, weak, possessive etc. He feels guilty for having those needs and desires, and consequently also feels himself an unworthy person. He develops feelings of self-hate, and also a desire to die. He hates his "self-image". We shall describe the growth of the child up to this point as the second-stage "self."

However, there is a desire to live and be liked in the growing child. The child performs a metamorphosis. He buries this hated self-image deep and develops a new self-image to live respectfully. He jumps from his more real position to another position where he feels he would be liked. We shall describe this new stage as the third-stage "self". If the child was dependent at the second-stage, he strives to become independent at the third stage. If he was dirty or bad he wants to become more and more clean and handsome. If he was inferior, he wants to become superior. If he was a "receiver," he wants to become "giver", and so on. This third-stage "self" is often placed in opposition to the second-stage "self." Its function is to suppress the hated image of the second stage.

This metamorphosis is performed by every child, although it may be minor in certain cases and major in others. The degree of insecurity and self-hatred at the second-stage "self" decides the degree of metamorphosis, as also the degree of opposition between the third-stage "self" and second-stage "self." This degree of opposition determines the degree of happiness or unhappiness and to a great extent the degree of alienation of each man in the society. The greater the opposition, the more unhappy and alienated a man is bound to be, notwithstanding his greatness and achievements in the society. Indeed greatness and happiness may have a negative correlation!

This third stage "self" represents the individuality of each person. It is this self-image and this individuality which each person understands himself to be in a given society. It is this third-stage "self" which makes each individual feel distinct and different from others. This is, in brief, the theory of the three-stage "self" of man as developed by the author in his book *Psycho-Analysis and Meditation*.

This growth of the infant from the first-stage "self" (*spiritual universality*) to second-stage "self" (*mostly animal universality*) and then to the third-stage "self" (*individuality*) represents a continuous journey of the consciousness away from its source, that is, supreme consciousness. It gets more and more enchained out of ignorance and loses almost total contact with the source.

Ego "I" and Real "I"

There are three "I's." One is the third-stage "I" where a person feels "I am a professor, editor, anthropologist or a minister etc." This is largely the socio-economic status "I." This is the "I" of the ego drives. Another is the second-stage "I" where a person feels, "I am sexy, I am vouyerist, I am jealous, I am greedy, etc." Both these "I's" put together represent the ego "I." But underneath lies the "self" the spiritual "I," the real "I." It is a stage of mere "I am" "I am," "I am," a stage of light, joy and love. It represents the final search of man, the final goal of man, the final freedom of man.

If we want to know our real "self," we have to transcend the ego "self." This means that we have to reverse the so-called process of growth. Instead, we have to perform a backward journey from the third-stage "self" to the second-stage "self," and then from the second-stage "self" to first-stage "self" to realise what we are!

We shall know it not by the process of "learning" (listening, reading, discussion, seminar, conferences etc.), but by the process of unlearning all that we have learnt by the processes of formal or informal education. It is not by the process of stuffing our minds with more and more information that we shall know it. We shall know it by de-stuffing our minds from all that has gone into it. It is learnt indeed through a process of deschooling, deconditioning and "unbecoming."

Consciousness is a jewel wrapped by the dirt of ideas, images, fears, drives, notions, perceptions etc. How do we find out the jewel again? We do it by removing all the dirt from it, and not by wrapping it with more dirt. All nervous formations and the sense-mind represent that dirt which covers the consciousness. It can be liberated by removing all that. What modern psychologists call development of personality by listening more, seeing more, and reading more, is indeed the reverse of it. It is but the process of strengthening the cage around the consciousness.

The Backward Journey

How does one perform the backward journey to realize the "self"? There are two methods to perform this backward journey. One is psychoanalysis developed by Freud. However, the major limitation of this method is that while it does take up from the third-stage "self" to the second-stage "self," it neither shows us the second-stage "self" completely, nor does it open the gate of the first stage "self" which is our final goal. Another method is meditation developed by saints of all religions. It is a complete method, which takes us to the final goal, although it may seem less rational in comparison to psychoanalysis while dealing with the second-stage "self."

Now we can discuss the various doubts and criticisms of the worldly-wise men about these Godmen. However, we must constantly keep in view the difference between worldly men and Godmen. A worldly man largely lives at the third-stage "self." All his opinions actions, judgements are as compulsive as the origin of that stage itself is. As much more lies underneath his third-stage, similarly, much more lies underneath all his actions, opinions and judgements. A Godman, on the other hand, lives at the first-stage "self."

Is Human Nature the Same Everywhere?

Certain scholars like Professor Agehananda Bharati do not take kindly to the idea of human nature being the same everywhere. Their thinking about this statement is that since all men eat, drink, couplate, sleep, pass wind, think, and die, so it is said human nature is the same everywhere. They consider this set of facts too trivial to prove the statement. But surely no one has said that human nature is the same everywhere on the basis of these facts.

When a really religious person or Godman says human nature is the same everywhere, he indeed refers to the first-stage "self" of each man. This is the stage of spiritual universality, and the basic substratum of each individual is the same consciousness. The attributes of this consciousness, that is, stillness, joy, light, and love are also the same.

When a psychoanalyst like Freud feels that human nature is the same everywhere, he largely refers to the second-stage "self" of each individual being. This is the stage of the animal universality of man.

According to the author, it is cent per cent the same everywhere. Indeed, each human being has security-need, the need for fulfilling hunger, and he normally develops, jealousy, anger, greed, lust, desire for possession and various other sensations and animal reactions. During the process of psychoanalyzing various people, one is simply astounded to find out again and again how the same fears, same desires, same notions, same perceptions haunt different individuals at the second-stage "self."

When Professor Agehananda Bharati feels that perhaps human nature is not the same everywhere, he is not very wrong. He simply speaks at the third-stage "self." It is indeed the stage of individuality, where each person seems to have a different personality and a different style of life. There may be certaincommon drives at this stage also. For example, one may try to feel superior to others, stronger than others, more handsome than others etc. But these drives are not so widespread as to permit the statement that human nature is the same everywhere. A person who tries to understand human life from the third-stage "self" will see human beings as distinct and will never appreciate the idea that human nature is the same everywhere.

As this third stage develops largely in opposition to the second-stage "self", no wonder any person living at this stage would like to disown nature. If Margaret Mead feels, as stated by Agehananda, that the anthropologist's job is to fight against human nature, one can simply understand it without reaction. She is also living at the same third-stage "self" of individuality, which is born out of condemnation of the more natural second-stage "self" and meant to suppress the second-stage "self." No wonder, she feels it her duty to fight nature.

If these persons start on the path of "de-learning" through meditation, or psychoanalytical meditation, they would be simply astonished not at the ignorance of the Godmen or even psychoanalysts but at their own ignorance! There is absolutely no intention to hurt their feelings by using the word ignorance in relation to them. This is a word which one applies to one's self again and again while doing meditation and evolving towards the final goal. One says "Wonderful! I was simply ignorant!" However, I know that this word hurts those people a lot who live at the third-stage "self," and read more and more to call themselves "learned." It is the quality of this stage that we pose (not deliberately) to be what we are not; and yet we resent it bitterly if we are told so! For example, tell any person whose actions are often cowardly that he is a coward and a violent emotional reaction will emerge immediately in him. The Godmen, or those who realize it, will speak from a position of the first-stage "self" and would always proclaim that "human nature" is the same everywhere.

There are certain other related questions. Are all religions one in their essence? How do we rate the Gita, Bible, Quran and other religious books? Professor Agehananda Bharati bemoans that even a learned man like the late Dr Bhagwan Das could not transcend the idea that there is an essential unity of all religions.

It is the quality of consciousness that in the backward journey through meditation, it transcends ignorance and not truth. What Dr Bhagwan Das says is truth. At the first-stage "self" one would immediately cry in escstacy "I am this! I am Christ, I am Mohammad, I am Lord Krishna." Any drop of water, whether taken from the ocean, a pitcher, river, or any other place, when purified and analyzed would be found to be absolutely the same in essence, that is, hydrogen and oxygen. The basic essence of each individual mind is consciousness. As soon as this individual consciousness, after getting purified (transcending the ego) comes into contact with the supreme consciousness, true religion emerges. The experiences are the same, but the description, due to the limitations of language, are different. The followers, not knowing the experience, stick to description and find differences in religion.

For the author there is not only a basic unity in all religions but also no fundamental difference in them. The differences appear at the third-stage "self" only when we become religious through listening, reading, seeing and other instruments of indoctrination. Truly speaking, a person who talks about differences in the essentials of religions is ignorant of religion.

Agehananda has some criticism against Bhagvadgita. One can easily accept his idea that there is difference between Bhagvadgita on the one hand and Bible and Quran on the other. But the arguments he gives for it, and the other opinions he holds for the Bhagvad Gita, are simply untenable. The essential differences between the Bhagvad Gita, Quran and the Bible lie not in the way Professor Bharati feels they lie, but in a very simple distinction!

The Bible and the Quran largely represent the experiences — spoken words, which come through meditational visualization and mystic communications, of two great saints Christ and Mohammad. Bhagvad Gita is a distinct book. It enumerates all the different ways through which the state of realization can be achieved. It sounds the basic principle that mind must be transcended by the consciousness to establish contact with the Supreme Consciousness.

That consciousness is immortal. The accused and accuser, the loser and winner, the killed and killer are nothing but the changing associations of the pure consciousness with the "acted-upon" or the "actor". Both are images in the mind largely belonging to the second-stage "self" and third-stage "self" respectively, and have no ultimate reality.

The Quran and Bible largely represent statements of yogic experiences. The Bhagvad Gita largely represents statements about the various methods to achieve yogic experiences.

Professor Bharati says that he finds many things in the Gita disgusting. He simply appreciates the poetic beauty of it. There can be people who do not appreciate even the poetic beauty. What will Professor Bharati say about such people? Whatever opinion or judgement he will have about such a person will be thoroughly applicable to him also. It must be understood for certain that whenever we so-called learned people describe the limitations of any great book of wisdom and religion, we unwillingly expose the limitations of our own minds!

Professor Bharati further declares that he criticizes Hinduism because he is a "committed" Hindu. I feel that a "realized" Hindu is a much better and desirable phenomenon than a "committed Hindu". A realized Hindu alone has done something real to save religion because a realized Hindu alone is a realized Muslim and a realized Christian and he knows that there is absolutely no difference! The godmen are realized Hindus. Because of them the real religious progress takes place and not because of committed Hindus, committed Muslims, or committed Christians.

Miracles: Their Secret and Purpose

Many wonder at the miracles performed by these godmen.

While some remain skeptical about these miracles and call them tricks, others agree with the genuineness of the miracles but simply do not understand how they happen and why they happen. Let us try to understand this phenomena.

Supreme consciousness is the source and goal of all levels of consciousness in the universe. Similarly, cosmic energy is the source and goal of all the units of energy in the universe. Everything is governed by a cause and effect relationship except this supreme consciousness which controls the total cosmic energy. It transcends all laws of science, all laws of matter, time and space.

If one (Individual Consciousness) develops contact with this Supreme Consciousness, one may develop extraordinary powers. Like Sai Baba one may cure an incurable disease without medicine, one may produce mangoes out of season, one may read the mind of others, one may see things at a far off distance or predict future events. One may also leave one's body at will, enter the body of another person, or even revive a dead body. Such powers become normal at the super-consciousness stage, as these powers are the attributes of the supreme consciousness commanding the total cosmic energy which is the cause of everything.

There are numerous people who have seen such acts in the life of Christ and many Indian saints and incarnations. Even today we see them. Those who do not understand this reality of supreme consciousness, and those who consider themselves "scientific" in the modern sense of the term, become victims of doubt. Numerous people who do not see such miracles say, "We have heard these things but never seen them." They also remain victims of doubt.

But there are thousands who develop faith in God after seeing such miracles. This is the purpose of miracles. Sai Baba's miracles have baffled scientists all over the world. He has not only declared philosophically but actually or empirically demonstrated in thousands or even lakhs of cases that He indeed is a God who knows the past and future lives as well as every thought, action, or word of every person living anywhere in the world. He performs the miracles of creating vibhuti, coloured powders, Gangawater, honey, oil, dry fruits, trophies, sweet water, statues, rings, lockets, crosses, watch, etc.

He also has his own spiritual telegraphy whereby as soon as an earnest devotee has a question or doubt in his mind, a chit of paper with Baba's written messages or words of guidance instantly appears although Baba may be thousands of miles away. God is present everywhere, He sees everyone, He is all powerful. Shri Sathya Sai Baba through the innumerable miracles done and divine connections made by Him has very convincingly prove that He is God. He knows the fate of every person and creature—every soul. It is, indeed, unfortunate that while the social and physical scientists of today seek validity, they do not come forward to see for themselves these great miracles done by Sai Baba everyday.

Those who continue meditation for years together know perfectly well that there is nothing surprising about it. It is indeed very logical. As a tiny flame by mixing into a big fire assumes the powers of the big fire, so the individual consciousness by getting in touch with the Supreme Consciousness assumes the power of the Supreme Consciousness.

One major doubt and question which has been raised by numerous people before the author in this regard is that if this power is there with certain saints and avatars (incarnations of God) why do they not use it to solve the country's food problem, or cure millions of people who are suffering?

The material and social world, and the ego world of the individual are governed by objective laws among which the law of cause and effect is the most fundamental. This is the law of karma (action) and its fruit. Most individuals live in this social-material world and the world of their egos. They are governed by this law. They also know that they are governed by this law. It is for this reason that they do actions and reap their fruits. This leads to their evolution or devolution. If the Godmen or saints were to solve all their problems instantly, they would stop all actions. Their evolution would stop.

The saints perform miracles so that people develop faith in God. Another purpose is to tell people that there is some power in them also to rise above the "cause and effect" law. The purpose of this faith is to put them on the path of right action. And the greatest right action or right karma is meditation which slowly and steadily produces the effect of the Supreme Power on the one hand and a state of peace, bliss, and freedom on the other.

Correct predictions are also possible by this phenomenon. Predictions are a reality when the individual consciousness gets in touch with the supreme consciousness, or even a part of it. Many Indian Tantriks develop a contact with a part of the supreme consciousness—the highly evolved individual consciousness of some gods and goddesses, and can predict many things. The predictive dreams also originate for the same reasons. The individual consciousness is in eternal search of its goal, that is the supreme consciousness. If, during sleep, it occasionally comes into contact with the supreme consciousness, it will touch upon a dream which will come true!

Here another question intervenes which we would like to answer. How is it that certain predictions of the saints come true while numerous others prove false. Certain dreams of the same individual come true while others turn out to be false.

The answer to this question is simple. Many saints occasionally get in touch with the supreme consciousness and predict things. Those predictions come true. However, this power and the praise received by them because of it, imparts occasionally a certain degree of pride and delusion to them. They (their egos) start feeling that the power belongs to them. Out of this pride and delusion, they predict certain things while living at the level of their "egos" which are not yet annihilated completely. Those predictions prove false and bring such saints into disrepute. This is, indeed, a widespread phenomenon among emerging yogis and saints.

No ego should feel that such powers belong to it. The powers belong to the Supreme Consciousness. The individual is only an instrument. The greatest or truly realized saints know it. They never claim that they have cured anybody or performed any miracle. They know that God works through them. They are simply instruments and witnesses. However, the lesser yogis and saints fall easy prey to the tricks of the ego and suffer.

Are Godmen Phoney?

Professor Agehananda Bharati feels that all godmen and swamis who are appearing in India or are going to the western world are phoney. His main grouse is that if they are not phoney they should discuss things with him and other scientists and should also disclose their primary sources and tools.

Our first reaction to his predicament is that if he really considers them phoney, why should he wish to discuss religion with them? For example, a genuine scientist would never like to discuss scientific matters with a person who is a phoney scientist. If the swamis refuse to discuss religion or their meditational-experience with Swami Bharati, maybe they consider him a phoney swami or a phoney intellectual. I do not know exactly, but my feeling is that Professor Bharati is impressed by these swamis unconsciously and that is why he wants to discuss things with them. But when he does not succeed, he reacts to his rejection and calls them "phoney" to maintain his own face. Surely his judgement belongs to the post-rejection period.

The godmen live at the first-stage "self." The scientist and the intellectual live at the third-stage "self." The knowledge of the latter category is incorporated knowledge.

The realization which takes place through the process of unlearning or uncovering in meditation cannot be realized through the process of learning or covering in discussion. A person who lives at the third-stage "self" and has developed strong ego drives has a compulsion to know more things through learning, reading, and discussion etc. But a person who lives at the third stage "self," and wants to reach the second-stage "self" and then to the first-stage "self" through meditation, knows perfectly well that it is impossible to grasp those realizations through discussion. He refuses to discuss. He knows the reactions, ego-frustration, and disappointment of a person living at the third-stage "self" in case the discussion is not permitted. He knows it because he also lived at the stage once. But he knows too well that nothing will come out of discussion.

Here I would like to make two observations. The first relates to the Godmen. They have lived at the third-stage "self." They know the reality of the egos of such men. They know their own reality also. It is better that occasionally they should strike a balance between the two realities and try to explain certain things to these people at the intellectual level, instead of denigrating discussion at all times. As they are instruments of God, and wish to preach His message, they adopt this method also, knowing fully well that numerous intellectuals want to know things through it. This may convince some of them about the path.

The second observation is in regard to the attitudes of scientists and intellectuals. They want to see data, tools of their collection, tools of their analysis etc. to bring faith in the truth. But don't they think that it is equally scientific to perform an experiment for some time to see the truth of something. They should learn the correct technique of meditation from someone and experiment with it for a year or so. It would be scientific and they would themselves discard many of their notions about learning through reading or discussion. They should indeed distinguish between the science of mind and soul on the one hand and the science of objective social material realities on the other. In meditation, one is the laboratory, experimenter, object, subject, data, everything!

Is Meditation an Anti-Intellectual Activity?

Another major criticism against the activities of various godmen and swamis relates to their stress on meditation. Intellectuals condemn meditation as an anti-intellectual activity. There are well-meaning persons who would say about sadhakas (those who do meditation), that they believe in the idea of soul as they are lazy people. Is meditation really easy?

What is an intellectual activity? It is an activity which is concerned with thought processes. The intellectual should discern new thought patterns, see new thought streams and adjust according to them. He should also vote himself to some cause of knowledge and truth, through these processes.

Meditation is at once an intellectual as well as supra-intellectual activity. It concerns itself with the most ancient, and yet most modern pattern of thought and wisdom. In fact, it concerns itself with the eternal pattern of thought. It seeks to propound and discover the same wisdom and truth through experience which is eternal.

Let us study the thought of Christ, Mohammad, Nanak, and Sai Baba. Do we find a similar pattern or not? Do these thoughts represent some kind of knowledge and truth? How do they reach them? There must be certain intellectual activity processes involved in that. In fact, in meditation there are three simultaneous processes—experiencing, visualizing, and thinking—which render it an intellectual activity par-excellence. These processes lead to conclusions about truth and wisdom.

Meditation is non-intellectual as an end-product. Ultimately, all activity stops, and a state emerges which is a state of vacuum or emptiness, stillness, reactionlessness and imagelessness. This is a state devoid of all intellectual activity. It may be described as a non-intellectual or anti-intellectual state, but those who have experienced it well know that it is a state which is superior to all knowledge, all karma, all greatness, all possession, all meaning, and all images!

Now we take up the second objection. The critics say that meditation is easy and is attempted by lazy people. This is a statement backed neither by experience nor wisdom but simply by an ego-drive of the third-stage "self" that "I am superior and what I have done is more difficult." It is eulogizing the unreal "self" or the "ego-I". Those who have done both things in their lives alone know that meditation is the most difficult karma. Its fruits are, accordingly, most superior.

"They will be known by its fruit." This is truly a statement of wisdom emerging out of experience and not out of mugging Sanskrit textbooks! People can read Sanskrit books for six hours a day, but they will find it very difficult to meditate for six minutes a day.

Do Meditational Movements Represent Genuine Religion?

The religious movements by the Godmen and other saints which mostly rest on one or the other technique of yoga have been described as spurious by Professor Agehananda Bharati. It is good that he has at least some notion of real religion. Marx considered all religion the "opium of the people," and Freud felt that all religions represented universal neurosis.

As has been explained already, there are three stages of the "self." The individual consciousness, which is part of the cosmic consciousness remains at either of these three "selfs." At the first-stage "self" it is a pure energy state, a universal spirituality state. The animal reactions of hate, jealousy, greed, lust, etc. emerge in the second-stage "self." Now this state is suppressed by society through fear and punishment. It becomes the unconscious and subconscious of man as described by Freud.

Now, new values and religion are incorporated in man to make him something better. Here develops the third-stage "self" of man which is his individuality. At this stage the individual becomes moral, and talks of values and religion. What Professor Bharati calls genuine religion is only this religion learnt at the third-stage "self," either through listening or reading religious texts.

There are two interesting questions which arise here. Where did values and religion come from? Why does society try to incorporate them in the human child?

Religion and values originate when an individual comes to the first-stage "self" again through meditation and psycho-analysis. This is a grand backward journey of the consciousness towards its source, that is, cosmic consciousness. In this journey, the consciousness first discards the third-stage "self" which it became out of fear and numerous identifications. Naturally, it also discards the values and religion which were incorporated in the individual through indoctrination.

From that third-stage "self", one would come to the second-stage "self" and would re-experience and re-visualize one's animal nature. This is experiencing the "unconscious" as given by Freud. But slowly and steadily, one would transcend this stage also. Thus one reaches the first-stage "self". This is a stage when all hate, attachment, possession, etc. vanish.

When one reaches the first stage, the individual consciousness lives in the organism (body of the individual) but it is no longer a victim of any desires, fears, or doubts. It is free from them. At this moment, it makes contact with the Cosmic Consciousness, or Master Spirit. The moment this contact is established, tremendous spiritual energy flows in the system of man. Love, happiness, and freedom are the attributes of this state.

It is at this stage that real values and religion emerge. Love for all, fearlessness, compassion, sacrifice, goodness, truth, they all emerge automatically at this stage. It is a state of perfect religion also—a state where, because of the contact of individual consciousness with the supreme consciousness one says, "I am God," or, "I am the son of God," or "I am the 'self'." This is the living religion. Lord Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, Nanak etc. all lived at this first stage.

Postscript—My Latest Experiences

I started as a Marxist in the early twenties of my life. Then I had to undergo psychoanalysis for four and a half years, during which I practiced meditation. At this time, Shri Sathya Sai Baba appeared in a dream and asked me to continue meditation. I have worked on a book, *Religion and Meditation*, with the help of Baba's suggestions to me in meditation, during the last eight years. I was about to get my manuscript typed out in March 1975, when suddenly a colleague of mine committed suicide, and I felt greatly depressed. My depression continued for long. I did a lot of meditation and prayed to Sai Baba to save me. After eight days, Baba appeared in His spiritual form in my room at midnight. He woke me up and asked me to sit and meditate as suggested by Him.

Next day, I was lying near His photo and suddenly my "Third Eye" opened, with Baba standing before me in full effulgence showing me a Shivalinga. I immediately noticed that the Kundalini in the form of a beautiful white cobra moved upward in my backbone. I went into a state of ecstasy. After three or four days, my "Third Eye" opened again, and I saw Sai Baba protecting me and showing Himself in the forms of Lord Krishna, Jesus, and other incarnations of God. With these experiences, I am now fully convinced about Baba's divinity. Will critics of God ever believe it?

10. SCIENCE—PATHWAY TO GOD REALIZATION

DR M. V. N. MURTHY

"We in India see God in trees, in plants, in birds; we worship Him everywhere, in all things. . . . Worship the stone as God, not treat God as stone," says Baba. Baba has been stressing that the entire creation including ourselves is the vesture of God. He has also been reminding us that we cannot see God other than in His vesture! To see God, we must recognise Him in everything that we see and experience!

Howard Murphet, in his book *Sai Baba—Man of Miracles,* records an interesting incident involving a professor of geology. "One day, at Puttaparthi, Baba picked up a rough piece of broken granite and handing it to Dr Rao asked him what it contained. The geologist mentioned a few of the minerals in the rock.

Baba: I don't mean those; something deeper.

Dr. Rao: Well; molecules, atoms, electrons, protons. . . .

Baba: No no, deeper still.

Dr Rao: I don't know, Swami.

Baba took the lump of granite from the geologist and holding it up with His fingers, blew on it. It was never out of Dr Rao's sight; yet, when Baba gave it back to him, its shape had completely changed. Instead of being an irregular chunk, it was a statuette of Lord Krishna playing His flute. The geologist noted also a difference in colour and a slight change in the structure of the substance.

Baba: You see? Beyond your molecules and atoms, God is in the rock and God is sweetness and joy. Break off the foot and taste it."

Before we can worship stone as God, we must recognize the stone as God! Baba gave the professor a practical demonstration in His inimitable way, reminiscent of the Upanishad rishi who explained the invisible and pervasive nature of Brahman by asking the eager student to add some salt to water; though it disappears, it can be tasted in every drop!

This is the spirit of the true scientist, who, like the ancient rishi, starts his enquiry motivated by wonder, and seeks to find answers to questions that come to his mind. Science is thus a pathway towards the realization of God, immanent in Nature, and the recognition that it is but a vesture of God!

When a geologist looks at a piece of granite, he recognizes that it is not a mere irregular piece of stone! His enquiry leads him to recognize that it consists of more than one type of matter, known as minerals. He finds that it is an aggregate of quartz (silicon dioxide), felspar (potassium-sodium aluminium silicate), biotite (hydrous potassium magnesium silicate). Each of these minerals is not a chaotic aggregate of atoms; each mineral is built as a beautiful edifice, with a regular pattern which is universal for that particular mineral.

Probing incisively by X-ray, the scientist recognizes that minerals have a unique architecture, expressing a grand beautiful Design!

Who is it that directs each silicon atom and oxygen atom to come together in a certain fashion and arrange themselves in a particular design, expressing itself as a grain of quartz? There must be a supreme all-pervasive intelligence, directing "matter" to arrange itself in such beautiful edifices! Thus the scientist starts searching for God until he sees God even in a piece of granite.

The true scientist recognizes that, with all knowledge he has gained and the probes that he has been able to make, there is a world beyond his grasp which he can only dimly comprehend, but cannot see.

Raynor C. Johnson in his book *Imprisoned Splendour* says:

> Space and time are reasonable and necessary concepts in this world of the microcosm. The fundamental laws of the microcosm, however seem to be very different; we are just beginning the probe into them. . . . In this world of the microcosm of atoms, protons, electrons and all the other 'material', none of the mental concepts—colour, position, shape, sound, resistance to touch etc.—apply. Indeed, Space and Time which seem to dominate our familiar world are quite elusive in the microcosm. They are concepts (which have proved very helpful to the understanding of our familiar world) which we have ourselves introduced into it—but only because we found ourselves built on a very large scale, compared with atoms and molecules.

The scientist attempts to see the truth behind the world of appearance. Like the ancient Indian rishi, the scientist is asking the basic question, "What is it that constitutes the world of matter?" "What is the basic substance from which all atoms are ultimately formed?" He is searching for the source of all this world of creation, the ultimate truth, sathyam!

The true scientist sees beauty beyond and within the world of matter. For him there is no ugliness! Even matter which looks ugly is actually in detail a world of beauty. The mud beneath our feet which soils and is slushy consists of minerals with beautiful patterns! Max Born, the great physicist, hailed the theory of relativity put forward by Einstein "because it made the Universe look more beautiful and grand!"

Dirac says, ". . . .it is more important to have beauty in one's equations than to have them fit the experiment. . . . It seems that if one is working from the point of getting beauty in one's equations, and if one has really a sound insight, one is on a sure line of progress."

Baba says, "Man is not a mere creature thrown up by nature in the process of evolutionary gamble.... He is Divinity encased in the human frame." Interestingly, Charles Darwin who gave the evolutionary theory a firm basis,"had also felt that quasi-mystical, 'deep inward experience' that there must be more in man than the mere breath of the body." He adds:

> Thus from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely the production of the higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning, endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved.

The true scientist sees beauty, sundaram, in nature, the vesture of God! Describing the landscape one can see in Kerala, Baba reminds us:

> The scenery formed by the backwaters and the coconut groves stretching from one end to the other was like a vast painting by a great artist on a huge canvas. The Lord enjoys these things as Painter; He appreciates His own handiwork, standing before His own painting or sculpture. To see the Lord's own loveliness in the lovely scenery around you requires not the outward eye but the inward eye. If you develop that walking over the land or voyaging over the waters is itself a pilgrimage through the Holy Land, giving you glimpses of God in every speck of cloud or patch of green. But all this Sundaram must lead man to Sathyam and all this Sathyam to Sivam or Mangalam. That is the natural path. The beauty of the Lord's handiwork leads man to the glory of the Lord; the picture makes you curious about the Painter. The Lord, when His Truth is grasped,

confers Bliss, which is Auspiciousness itself!

The scientist's understanding of the world of appearance also reveals to him that the basic law which holds it together is the law of attraction, which in human language may be called love! Within the atom, the protons and electrons hold together in an ecstatic, epic dance of Love. In a crystal, atoms are held together by attraction. The moment these are broken, the atoms tend to come together and form new associations. The entire world of Nature illustrates the law of love, which Baba has described as the very basis of God's creation.

"Beyond your molecules and atoms, God is in the rock. And God is sweetness and joy," Baba reminded the professor of geology. The ancient rishi who shouted in joy, *"Vedantametam Purusham mahantam"* (I know God) also said, *"Rasovaih Sah"* (O! He is Sweetness Incarnate!)

The scientist first learns to see God in the world around him. As his wonder leads him deeper into the mysteries of nature, he begins to discern the Great Artist, the Great Engineer, the Great Architect, the Great Physician, who hides behind and manipulates creation! He starts recognising truth (sathyam), he thrills with beauty (sundaram), and begins to experience bliss (sivam) auspiciousness!

In the piece of stone he sees sathyam, sivam, sundaram and he worships the stone as God! Science is a great pathway to the realization of God—with form or without form!

11. THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE AGE OF SCIENCE

MAYAH BALSE

Supernatural phenomenon have over the years posed a challenge to scientists. Yet there is something too real about these "miracles" which cannot be wholly denied. What is apprehended by the senses yet cannot be comprehended by the mind, can hardly be dismissed as mass hysteria or the mania of cranks. There can be no doubt that, of late, such phenomena are becoming too many and widespread to be ignored.

Ours is not a strictly religious age, where blind faith holds sway. This is Kali Yuga, the age of doubt and dissension, of curiosity and questioning. For ages, religious dogma had such a hold over mortal minds that even the greatest miracles were taken in their stride. But a man who has experienced in his life-time the glorious achievement of a moon landing, can hardly be expected to cling to the belief that Chandra, the moon god, resides there.

Man's scientific mind has through the years hankered after proof. Today, he has turned more practical, less spiritual, with the result that a bewildering number of inexplicable happenings cannot be grasped by him. He can see them of course, but he refuses to believe the evidence of his eyes and dismisses them as magic, sleight of hand, or just a clever deceit. Yet, the fact remains that they are things beyond the pale of normal explanation. Man is then in the same position as a child, who when confronted with a clash between pet theories and new manifestations, closes his eyes and says, "I give up."

One such phenomenon is that of "thaumaturgic power", popularly known as faith-healing. For some reason or the other, hopeless cases which have defeated doctors often get miraculously cured at the hands of holy men like Bhagvan Shri Sathya Sai Baba. The life of this great mystic is replete with instances of miracle cures. I have heard personal accounts of how He has cured cancer and made paralytics walk again, how he has given sight to the blind and hearing to the deaf. Those who have felt the benefit of His great healing hand are full of praise for Him. Yet, not all who have gone to Him in despair have returned cured. A few have remained in a static condition with neither improvement nor regression. But far from losing faith in their Guru, they have often got renewed strength from their visit to Him, so that they are able to suffer the fruits of their karma with patience and forebearance.

In healing of this sort, it would be short-sighted to altogether discount the power of the patient's mind. I will give below two isolated cases which have no connection with any guru or mystic, but will amply illustrate how a person's mental state can effect his bodily condition for better or worse.

It was Feroze Parekh of Secunderabad who related to me the strange case of Mrs Jassobhoy. He had known the lady and met her during both stages of her illness. She was unable to bear strong sunlight. At first, it was only the sunlight that she found offensive. Later even the glow of an electric bulb grew unbearable, and would make her eyes water. Towards the end, her condition got so bad that dark paper had to be wrapped around all the bulbs in the house.

Then suddenly she lost her mind. She turned completely senile. Her understanding reverted to that of a seven-year old child. When this happened there was a remarkable transformation in her physical condition. Parekh told me that every trace of her former illness disappeared. She did not complain of pain in the joints any more. In fact, she often ran down the stairs and even skipped with all the exuberance of a child. Her eye trouble showed such extraordinary improvement that she could even stand bright sunlight without glare glasses.

In another case, a childless wife, in her intense desire for an offspring, simulated the exact symptoms of pregnancy. These persisted even when the pregnancy test turned out negative. When her stomach began to bulge with the passage of months, even her husband was inclined to believe it. It was then that the gynaecologist carried out a test. He gave the woman a sleep-inducing drug. When she was fast asleep, her stomach deflated exactly like a baloon till it reached its normal level. The husband watched the results with great astonishment. The doctor had demonstrated convincingly to him that the "symptoms" were all in the mind. When she woke up the stomach was back to its bloated size.

This proves that the mind plays a great part in faith-healing. When the effect of the mind is minimized, even physical manifestations of sickness can disappear without a trace. In the two above cases, the power of the mind was neutralized by natural causes in the case of the old lady and by drugs in the case of the "pregnant" one. The same thing could conceivably happen when a patient "abandoned" himself to a faith-healer with complete trust, by playing down his own will. This is possibly why saints with thaumaturgic power insist that cure-seekers should give up their egoism and completely surrender to the power of the almighty.

The phenomenon of materialization, however, is more difficult to explain. When we see the materialized object before us produced from thin air, there is a natural confusion between our beliefs and the strong evidence of the senses. Calling it magic or sleight of hand is really no explanation at all. Besides, some kinds of materialization have no physical contact at all with the person performing the act of "producing". Examples of this are the appearance of vibhuti, kumkum, honey and nectar from framed photographs which have just been hung on a well.

Lila Singh, whose house in Bombay I visited, had dozens of such photographs, each oozing a different substance. She attributed the phenomenon to the power of Shri Sathya Sai Baba. The manifestations started when a friend of hers in Calcutta gave her a photograph of Bhagwan. Later the phenomena seemed to effect any photograph she framed and hung up. There were several photographs of Shri Sathya Sai Baba, and others of Sri Krishna and Rama. There was even a photograph of her daughter who had died some years back. Lila held bhajan sessions on Thursdays when these manifestations were seen to increase. She herself was able to provide no explanation for the remarkable happenings. As she confessed, she did nothing. It was all the power of Bhagwan Shri Sathya Sai Baba.

Scientific laws say you cannot produce something from nothing. What is said to be materialized from empty space is in reality already in existence. It is a spirit from the higher or lower astral who fetches the object unseen and gives it in the wonder worker's hand.

But this too is hardly an explanation. If what is said to be produced is already in existence, why don't we see it before it appears. Is there then another dimension we do not yet comprehend? Is there a sixth sense which is not given to all people?

Science may not yet have stumbled on a conclusive explanation but there are a few theories floating around. One of them is that there is a fourth dimension or plane distinct from the three visible ones. Let us suppose that worms, for instance, can see only two dimensions, especially if the worm is on an apple where it can't see the roundness of the fruit. We were in a similar situation when we believed the world to be flat.

Now we live in a three dimensional world and just when we have taken it for granted, a fourth dimension is slowly being revealed to us. It has perhaps been there all the time just as the other half of the moon has always been there. Now some people have developed the power not only to see glimpses of this fourth dimension but also to lower its field so that facets of it come into our three dimensional world. Just how this is done cannot yet be fathomed, but it is being done by an increasing number of people, among others, Narayan Baba of Hyderabad, Nilkanth Tathaji of Kurnool and Dadaji of Calcutta.

There are some mystics who do not indulge in what they term "showy business" and these are the ones who condemn it too. They believe that such powers of materialization come naturally to a yogi who does *tapasya*. But far from being side-tracked into displaying them, a true and devout mystic pursues his goal of self-realization with single-mindedness. Such manifestations are to be shunned as they are obstructions in the path of dharma. They are merely conjurers' tricks. But merely saying that they should not be done, does not remove the fact that they are there, very much in evidence, ever baffling the scientist who is on the lookout for constructive explanations.

Sai Baba of Shirdi, who had many devotees and is still looked up to and revered, years after his samadhi, was a godly man who did not believe in displaying such miracles of materialization. He was a simple man who came under a fakir's influence and quickly climbed the spiritual path. Once he had attained it, he wandered off to Shirdi where an ashram quickly grew up around him. He had always been interested in the properties of plants and herbs and he began making use of them to cure certain ailments. He had a gentle manner and his medicines were vastly successful. As his fame grew, more and more people flocked to Shirdi and stayed on as his devotees. His spiritual background and saintly ways made them revere him almost like a God. He was absolutely impartial and knew no distinction of caste, creed, or religion. He had a resonant voice and sang bhajans himself in the ashram which mushroomed around him. He is shown in photographs as a bearded man with a scarf knotted round his head, sitting on a stone with one leg folded and placed over the other knee. He attained peaceful Samadhi in 1918.

The effects he left are far reaching. People still flock to Shirdi to feel his presence and get inner peace. Two present day miracle-men claim to be his reincarnations, and a third mystic confesses he is not a reincarnation but a kind of spiritual medium between the spirit of the Sai Baba of Shirdi and the common man.

One of the two mystics who are said to be the reincarnation of Sai Baba of Shirdi is Basheer Baba of Hyderabad whom his devotees insist is an *avatar*. He proclaims that he was first Prahlad, the son of Hirnakashyapa, then was born as Kabir, next as Sai Baba of Shirdi, and finally as Basheer Baba, preaching his spiritual message from Ram Sai Nagar where he has an ashram.

The other saint is Shri Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparti. Sri Sathya Sai Baba has a very large following and is often referred to as "the Man of Miracles." There are many similarities in the lives of both Sai Baba of Shirdi and Shri Sathya Sai Baba. An old woman who in her youth looked after Shri Sathya Sai Baba in His "previous birth," remembers also similarities of behaviour and speech. But the physical appearances are totally different.

Reincarnation is another of those elusive realms not verifiable by scientific methods. Though a great deal of research has gone into the subject and we have overwhelming evidence of the theory in Ian Stevenson's *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*, much is still enveloped in a haze of scepticism. Matters become still more confused when two or more mystics lay claim to be incarnations of the same departed sage!

Narayan Baba is a mystic who insists that Sai Baba of Shirdi has not been born again. His spirit still moves around doing good to humanity. He says the disembodied soul of his dead guru talks to him. He sits before a framed photograph of the Sai Baba of Shirdi and looks at it for enlightenment whenever he is baffled by a query from one of his devotees. With the help of his guru's spirit, he is even able to materialize rings, lockets, and vibhuti from thin air. When asked how he produces these things he declares that the spirit of his departed guru gives them in his hands, so that when he opens this fists the object is there. This explanation seems to coincide with stories of "rapport" where media who commune with the souls of the dead are able to produce material objects apparently from thin air.

Materializations of this sort have been quite common in the history of spiritualism. Madame Blavatsky who came to India heading the Theosophical Movement is reputed to have made rare varieties of flowers shower out of thin air, besides materializing a cup and saucer. More recently, Keith Rhinehart of Washington has materialized tiny plastic discs, expensive ornaments, and even a prehistoric bronze Roman coin from the second century A.D. A colour movie taken of him in Seattle showed Rhinehart producing black stones from his ears. These came from inside him, appeared as bulges in the neck and subsequently dropped out of the ears. An Indian parallel is Shri Sathya Sai Baba who at Shivratri is seen to take out of His mouth Shivalingams which are apparently born within him.

An interesting fact that comes to light is that the manifestation of such sensational phenomena is not necessarily linked to religion. For instance, in the West there was a man called Joseph of Copertino, who in his moods of ecstasy would float great distances before alighting. There was Daniel Douglas Home, a medium who was accomplished at flying in and out of windows. In India there has not been a single concrete instance of such a feat, though there are yogis who have made fantastic claims of being able to fly through the air.

There is a great deal of difference in the attitudes of the east and the west. This was more especially so in the past. In India or Tibet a holy man or yogi was revered and worshipped and made much of, while in the progressive west the monotheist teachings of Christianity stifled spiritual initiative and drove it underground. People who exhibited supernormal traits or dabbled in mysticism were denounced as heretics and often burned at the stake. In spite of this, supernormal manifestations continued to erupt in sporadic bursts and baffle scientists.

There was Franz Mesmer who spoke of an "animal magnetism" and a "psychic ether" which had ever moving tides during health and stagnation during sickness. He made use of magnets to move these tides and cure sickness of all kinds, till the day he discovered that his own body itself was a powerful magnet which could achieve the same effect by mere touch, as long as the patient sincerely believed this would work and he put himself in Mesmer's hands with full faith. This was probably the forerunner of faith-healing as we know it today!

The twentieth century brought men like Edgar Cayce and Peter Hurkos who did feats of mind-reading, located stolen objects, and predicted disasters before they occurred. After them were men like Rhinehart who could materialize physical objects. Both in India and abroad, there have been men as well as women who exhibited spectacular traits.

Why is it that some people at some stages in their lives erupt with some uncanny power, which may or may not have anything to do with religion?

Looking at the history of mysticism one encounters striking similarities in the lives of these supermen and the exact moment of spiritual explosion. Almost every case where the upsurge of power has been sudden and violent, is associated with some great shock or injury which induced coma. Edward Alexander Crowley (1875), the superman who is said to have made himself invisible and who generated a peculiar "sex magic", suddenly developed his powers at fifteen years of age after a fire-cracker explosion which nearly killed him. Peter Hurkos fell from a ladder while professionally engaged in the job of painting a house. He fractured his skull, lay unconscious for a long time and erupted with "second sight" on coming out of his coma.

Vivekananda felt a subtle shock of electricity penetrating his body at his guru's touch. It made him unconscious. When he came to senses, he found his master Shri Ramakrishna weeping with joy, "Today I have given you my all and have become a fakir. Through this power you will do immense good to the world." A woman mystic and faith-healer, Rajamma Devanandan, fell grievously ill and lapsed into a coma before she awoke to head her Healing Ministry.

In a village a few miles from Guntur in Andhra Pradesh, there is a retired school teacher Subba Rao who one night rolled off his bed and fractured his skull. His unconsciousness seems to have shaken loose some faculty because he surfaced claiming to have super-normal powers and what is more demonstrated them. He generated a strange animal magnetism akin to Mesmer's and cured a patient by just touching him on the head. It is said that Shri Sathya Sai Baba too had a similar experience at the age of fourteen when He lay in a dead swoon after being bitten by a scorpion. When he awoke he astonished the world with His miracles. He has, of course, asked people not to believe that He acquired these spiritual powers on His being bitten by a scorpion.

Of course, these account for only a few of the vast numbers of mystics who have erupted on the surface of the earth. There are others no doubt who have acquired rare siddhis through long years of arduous meditation. What seems to be happening to the world is a kind of spiritual evolution, where more and more people, both eastern and western, are hankering after inner peace. They have become aware that something must awaken to lift them far above the rough and tumble of an uncertain world. As to where he will go from here with this fresh burst from a spiritual explosion which is at once new and strange to him, only the future will tell.

In the seeming chaos of nature there is some primeval pattern unfolding in the universe. Darwin called it the theory of evolution and said that the ape was our remote ancestor who developed by gradual stages to modern man as we know him today. What passed between is lost in prehistory as an unchronicled saga of ape and super ape, who took the first step towards civilization with faint stirrings of what were probably the beginnings of intelligence. How this explosion took place we will never know.

Yet there is a curious, almost parallel phenomenon taking place today. We view with a mixture of suspicion and veneration the sudden upsurge of supernormal phenomena which in recent times have grown too numerous to ignore. More and more men and women find some inexplicable power stirring awake within them. Nature does not discriminate in the choice of persons because we find these superbeings hailing from all walks of life.

What then is the explanation for this abundance of supernormal energy in so many beings? An answer could well be found in the very same theory of Evolution which Darwin propagated and which we have come to accept as an integral part of civilization and life. Life as we know it is still in the process of evolving. The first step came when the ape became a cave man. He had then developed on the physical plane. Next came mental growth which was at once stupendous and undeniable. Man set himself to complicated tasks and fulfilled them. He advanced in science, technology, and medicine.

The third phase was development on the spiritual or mystical plane, whatever we may mean by than. God and Nature apart, there is some force or energy within us which is stirring awake, more in some people than in others. According to the yogic concept, the kundalini or energy force in man is symbolized as a coiled serpent lying at the base of the spine. Could there not be some connection between this Kundalini and the ape's tail which disappeared long ago, leaving its vestige in a concentrated form at the base of the spine?

Just as apes didn't cease to exist with the evolution of a new man, "normal" men and women will perhaps not cease to be, even if a newer and superior being should make his appearance. So we will have three creatures existing side by side in a brave new world.

12. BUILDING A WORLD COMMUNITY

DR DUANE ROBINSON

Sathya Sai Baba explains his presence among men today as fulfilling a divine mission to mankind. He teaches that His Mission is to help humans to understand better themselves as possessing, each of them, a spark of the divine. And He teaches men to work together and serve each other so that mankind can live, finally, in a world community governed by love, cooperation, and concern for each other's well-being.

This requires a spiritual revolution, profound changes in the attitudes and way of life of mankind. An assumption upon the basis of which these notes are based is that humans have the potential for participating in such a spiritual revolution. Sai Baba states repeatedly that at man's centre is his divine self. His expression of base thoughts, feelings and deeds are but surface intrusions from the outside which divert human attention from this basic spiritual centre and frustrate the development of a deeper awareness of human spirituality. Such development would be in the nature of a spiritual revolution. The focus of this paper is to explore some elements which might be identified as going into such a revolution, and, within a sociological frame of reference, to describe some of the elements and some of the processes.

In order to grasp the concepts, however, some of the writer's beliefs ought to be stated. I believe that Sai Baba is in fact leading such a spiritual revolution, which will change the life of mankind on earth, and that many millions of people in one way or another are getting involved in it. I think Sai Baba's effort, in considerable measure, is to teach humans how we may learn to think, to understand ourselves, and to behave in order to participate in and be instruments of this profound spiritual change in man. I believe that, in terms of decades, the changes are gradual, but in terms of centuries, they are rapid.

It, hopefully, is clear that a world community is what is needed. Modern conditions, environmental, ecological, technological, and communicational, suggest the requirement of a world outlook, a world view. A world community is called for and eventually must be built. Sai Baba has said very clearly that human love, which is expressed in simple and rich form in the family, must be expressed and made the heart of human relations in all societies and the world.

We are all interconnected. The safety and well-being of the whole and its parts are inextricably interrelated. We need to move, He says, from I to We. This expresses a basic ecological principle, the principle explaining the interrelationships and interconnections between things. Upon the basis of this principle, using this ecological methodology, an examination of the condition of the world community is in order. At first glance, it is clear that processes initiated by human activities have interfered with and disrupted certain natural and healthy processes profoundly.

Take the earth's soil itself. The Navajo Indian prayer "The earth's strength is my strength," is a noble prayer. In contrast, the modern practice of mining the soil, overexploiting and robbing it of its productive capabilities and reducing it to sterile desert wasteland, is incredibly stupid. Earth should be appreciated as the great natural factory it is, combining minerals and organic matter in a huge bacteriological factory. While maintaining its vital functioning man can prudently extract a portion of the factory's production for himself. This would, then, seem to be a rational policy to follow. Yet one can see examples of both this policy and its opposite.

There have been both ruthless extraction of nutrition, crippling the factory by extravagant and careless farming, and also careful, conservative husbandry by Dutch, Scandinavian, Japanese and millions of other farmers and peasants in many parts of the world. These latter people live close to nature. They understand that we humans, as predators and consumers, depend upon the producers in our biological community. They pay earnest attention to our holy responsibility not to destroy our natural benefactors and servants.

Take water—our rivers, lakes and oceans are precious resources of food, temperature control, energy, and daily life. Yet we use rivers for disposal of sewage when it should be returned to the land. We use our waters for disposal of poisonous industrial wastes, we use the oceans as great septic tanks for industrial waste, atomic waste, hydrocarbon spillage and runoff from agriculture, etc. Mercury, cadmium, lead, asbestos, and thousands of exotic and lethal chemicals are dumped into earth's finite waters to poison all life.

Take air—pollution from industry, urban concentrations, and automobiles threaten to make our very air no longer safely breathable.

Then, take sheer population pressure. In 1975 they are close to four billion humans on earth. An optimal balance with present resources might be one billion or less humans. One might project more, but one loses the elements of optimal conditions of living with such an increase. Imagine a world of a billion persons, with resources conserved and used sparingly, and distributed equitably among all, with our present level of technology used skillfully, and a planning perspective which looks ahead to providing equally adequately for our descendents a century later. This is eminently possible for mankind.

In contrast, in Stockholm at the UN Environmental Conference in 1972 Mrs Indira Ghandi reminded us that "one-third of the world's people, more than a billion people, live undernourished, illiterate, mostly without work and almost without hope, in the cities of the world."

Take food—we distort and wantonly destroy nature's gifts. We polish rice and take away its basic worth, we remove wheat germ from flour and eat the paste, we bleach flour and sugar, adding a caustic chemical, we chlorinate, flouridate and soften our water with poisonous salts and carcinogenic substances. This is extravagant misuse of his natural surroundings by man.

Some technological considerations confront us. Sai Baba's teachings place an ethical demand on scientists to remain pure in their search for truth, to be motivated by ethical concern for their fellow humans. Laboratories all over the world, unfortunately, are manned by scientists and technologists who are prostituting their skills and violating their ethics. But technology, for all its positive and negative values, must be evaluated within another context. Technology and engineering have provided important gains for man in health, food, housing, transportation, energy, etc. A moral and rational technology, environmentally sensitive and humanistically sensitive, could apply itself to the nurturing of life on earth. *Or,* man can use this technology to destroy himself.

Application of energy and technology to war and killing truly violates man's divine intention. The mobilization of sophisticated atomic, chemical and biological instruments to killing purposes is unforgiveably intentional within this context. Think, also, about our fascination with speed and waste of energy in speeding. Think about the fragile, stressed structure of urbanism and city life.

Let me summarize the technological dilemma as follows :

(*i*) In our pursuit of chemical solutions, and playing with our chemical toys, we are putting into our natural habitat sophisticated substances vastly more lethal and malignant than nature is accustomed to dealing with, and nature, in re-adjusting, may have to end the life of many life forms which cannot adapt. This can go on only to our peril.

(*ii*) In our atomic development we have produced the means for our own quick destruction. How many changes do we have to make to avoid atomic accidents or planned events that would effectively poison our world or major parts of it? Our current supplies of atomic material, we know, can destroy us all many times over. And neither military use, what we call "peaceful use", nor potentials for future use, give us a viable trade-off or promise man very much that is of present meaning to us.

(*iii*) The question is, how can humankind effect a revolutionary change to a benign and helpful technology from our present misuse and abuse? How can the human community direct its scientific community to be guided by human and spiritual values?

For a moment consider these humanistic, or human life organizational, psychological, and sociological considerations. Speaking of the use of energy and resources, the U.S., with six to seven per cent of the world's people, pre-empts forty or more per cent of the world's energy, mineral, fibre and food resources. Each U.S. person uses ten, twenty or fifty times the energy and resources of an Indian, Indo-Chinese or African peasant. Europe's interest in speed has led to the Concord, Tu 144, supersonic transport planes. One estimate is that one round trip of one of these planes over a major ocean would use enough fuel to support the manufacture of nitrogen fertilizer that would increase food production enough to feed twenty million people. This is the kind of perverse world resource planning and energy planning for human welfare that is going on.

Right now, world resource and energy production cannot support four billion, or even one billion, people at the U.S. level of consumption and waste. It would mean resource exhaustion and futility. It might support one billion people at France's or Scandinavia's level, with conscientious energy and resource conservation and planning. A solution must be found in new world standards of living which scale down the gluttony and waste of U.S. and European standards, develop massive recycling and conservation efforts, and rethink profoundly the concept of resource use and sharing.

Three problems interact on each other—world population excess, overexploitation of resources and massive waste, and maldistribution of resources, so some overindulge and many starve and suffer.

Speaking further of human organization, health specialists warn us of the possibility of new virus illnesses arising out of our use of new biotics, medicines, and chemicals to control diseases, of new mutations of disease-bearing viruses, and diseases from our ingestion of radioactivity, hydrocarbons and other substances from pollution of air, water and food, and of the degradation of our environmental surround. A huge new world sanitation and health effort is needed right away.

New stress diseases are showing up, and a diminution of human vitality, along with increases in cancer and cardiovascular and gastro-intestinal diseases, mental and emotional illnesses, ambulatory psychotics and severe neurotics, pervasive discouragement, apathy and anger, crime and violence, and addiction to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, coffee and TV. Especially is violence and crime the outcome of stress, violent teachings on TV and movies, and anger, frustration and insecurity. Loneliness, alienation, isolation and despair grow. Deterioration of public morale is accompanied by widespread economic corruption and sin, in which poor people try to copy their economic masters' thieving by stealing from stores and from each other. Political corruption emerges, in the U.S. people are shocked and educated by the Watergate incident, the discovery of extensive corruption involving the president himself.

And let me gently mention mistakes in judgment and give as an example the Indian decision to explode atomic materials and join the world "Atomic Club." For what reasons of false national pride, of military consideration, or of whatever other cause, what kind of a club is that to join? India has given to the world spiritual awareness and the leadership of saints like Mahatma Gandhi.

What, then, is our world condition? It seems that humans are presently busily destroying themselves, not purposely but surely. Some persons, in their discouraged moments, say that for the sake of other species it would be good for man to go, that it would be better to have planet earth survive as a viable habitat for a variety of life forms, without man's presence, than to have it all destroyed through man's errors. But other more hopeful persons are assured that man can learn how to co-exist with the other life-forms that go to make up the mutual support structures, the eco-systems, that are found in the biosphere—the vegetation, bacterial life, animal life.

Not yet is racial elimination a viable option for humans to consider. Sai Baba has said, reassuringly, that it is not the Divine intention that man shall be destroyed, or shall destroy himself. He has not promised that we shall escape unscathed from the predicament into which our vast flood of mistakes and misdeeds have brought us. But He has shared His Divine vision of a human race living together in love and understanding in communities of their creation.

The present state of world disorder should prove beyond question that the world's fragmented, nationalistic, social organizational forms are inadequate to accomplish the radical changes needed. Humans had better learn internationalism in a hurry. The U.S. war experience, four wars and countless smaller efforts in policing the world in a few more than fifty years, has shown the bankruptcy, futility and extreme danger of militarism as a national strategy. Most nations are presently entrapped in an exhausting and debauching system of maintaining military establishments. Together two hundred billions of dollars are spent each year, the cost of preparing to kill each other, each in defense, of course. Such preparations, planes, nuclear bombs, delivery systems, are not tools of the Divine intention. These pursuits offer nothing by continued death and destruction. A way out, away from this plague, needs to be found.

Many voices, including the writer's, argue for a world-wide, planetary approach to the basic problems of human organization, of human community. And some very critical, ambitious, perhaps risky, steps need to be taken in the present generation if human welfare, even in the simplest forms, is to be served.

In terms of sheer human communication, the world is one people. World broadcasts of daily events on world TV and radio are technically feasible. Airplanes travel halfway around the world in fifteen to eighteen hours travel time or less, faster planes make it faster, guided missiles are faster yet. Ideas get communicated from one part of the world to another very quickly—we need not be ignorant about each other. Sai Baba's message of world brotherhood and love is highly relevant to all humans today.

There is, indeed, a powerful basis, as well as an immediate and urgent need, for a world community based upon a world culture, neither western nor eastern, but a creative synthesis of the best in each, that would honour the richness and variety of contributions from all the continents: Africa with its ancient culture of several thousands of years, South America with its very ancient heritage, China, Japan, Indo-China, Europe, especially India. The world's people could share spiritual awareness, aesthetic variety, noble visions, common possession of basic needs, and could celebrate together co-possession of the Divine.

What must happen for such a world community to emerge? What must we humans do? Some basic psychological changes must occur among humans, each of them an essential part of the human character, but needing liberation and nurturing. One is a change toward fuller sharing of human love toward one another. Another change is toward human sharing and human service, so that each human shall share and serve, and be shared with and served in ways integral to his being. Another is toward discipline, of meaner aspects of the human character that must be controlled and channelled into community-supportive pursuits. And, finally, toward responsibility to one's self, to one's indispensible and integral community, and to the world of humans as a whole.

Some major institutional changes must be made in building a world community. In this effort the social scientists, social and economic planners, and social engineers, will find new roles and new usefulness in service to humankind. Here are a few examples of directions of change.

(*i*) Cease (a) the disastrous diversion of resources to military preparation; (b) the frightful misuse of world energy in destructive international conflicts; (c) the insidious development of scientific military weaponry and the frightful practice of actually using such weaponry against human and other sentient beings and against the environment. Effective ways must be sought to support the processes and instrumentation of non-violent settlement of international disputes.

(*ii*) Deal with the extremes of hunger, ill-health and deprivation, of child neglect and abuse, of family degradation and disintegration, of community demoralization and helplessness, which are the lot of hundreds of millions of the world's people under present economic and institutional systems.

(*iii*) Develop national and international planning for *world resource reallocation and sharing*, for readjusting present radical imbalances and related resource misuse, extravagant waste and irretrievable destruction, particularly in some developed countries. The present preemption of resources by richer countries must cease, and a more equitable sharing of resources among countries must be elevated to the highest priority in national and international concern. People in the developed and over-developed countries will need to learn to live more sparely and elegantly, and deal with their own widespread habits of materialistic gluttony.

(*iv*) Re-examine the idea of economic growth as the central idea of national and world development. The concept of man-and-environment equilibrium must be furthered, also those of relating more carefully economic growth values with other basic values of stability and conservation and fostering of broader reaches of human creativity and fulfilment, of creating new values and new social institutions around those values.

(*v*) Learn how to build rational human settlements, how to build and sustain viable human communities in metropolitan, urban, village, and rural areas. Adequate ways must be sought for dealing with present disastrous urban conditions of poverty, pollution and misery. Means must be provided for mobilizing the maximum efforts of local populations in improving neighborhood life and establishing conditions of dignity, responsibility, vitality, and initiative.

(*vi*) When it comes to national development planning efforts, there are conflicting pressures for advanced industrial and economic development, and for maintenance of national self-reliance and cultural integrity. Nations must set out to meet basic requirements of shelter, clothing, nutrition and vibrant health, liberating education, creative leisure, and cultural, familiar, and community integrity as essential elements of an adequate quality of life.

(*vii*) Build a planetary community, based upon a new realization of planetary interdependence of man and nature, and of the planetary loyalty and identification upon which must be based world action toward the enhancement of man's condition, his freedom, well-being and community life.

(*viii*) Accept the ethical value that the basic requirements of life must be shared fairly among the members of the world human community as a basic function of community life. Carefully husband resources, and carefully design efforts to guarantee the optimal meeting of present needs of this generation's children and their children's children. Deal with malfunctioning of institutions and organizations as they strive to fulfil their responsible community functions. Provide the optimum of real values and qualities in life of which the world community is capable.

In summary, the vision of a world based upon the principles of brotherly love, peace, mutual sharing, and mutual service, tells us that exploitation, both of resources and of human life, must cease. The world's resources must be shared, and the welfare of the world's people seen as a whole. The differences between our peoples and their cultures must be honoured and our commonalities celebrated. Further, some important personal life styles will be changed: moving away from materialism and preoccupation with owning and having; moving to spare and elegant living and the pursuit of higher values; and moving to the cooperative building of the spiritual community based upon the Divinity in each human.

In this building activity man will find fulfilment of his need for adventure, first, in the search for knowledge—"what we know now is but a grain of sand on the shore," second, in building a world spiritual community, and, third, in developing our psychic and spiritual capabilities at ever-higher levels of spiritual awareness and oneness with the Infinite.

To build a world human community is to meet and serve some of man's deepest needs and desires. It requires dedication, some skills that can be learned and practiced, and some awareness of the great challenge such building offers to humans. Sai Baba has presented this challenge unmistakably.

13. BUILDING THE SAI COMMUNITY

DR DUANE ROBINSON

Devotees and followers of Sathya Sai Baba speak of themselves and think of themselves as members of a great family bound together by their mutual devotion to the Divine One whose love and grace enrich and spiritualize their lives. They speak of the "Sai family" and the brotherly and sisterly relations which tie them together. They celebrate moments together, exchanging warm and kindly friendship. Baba continually recognizes the importance of these relationships of devotees as having much importance in the lives of individuals. He instructs us to seek out the companionship of devotees, serious students, and spiritual seekers.

Thus the task emerges for followers of Sai Baba, and for serious seekers for awareness of the divine intention, of building the Sai community, a community based upon the principles of truth, right conduct, peace and love, and striving for the goals of spiritual consciousness, oneness with the Divine, and service to the community.

The question arises, if the human task is to strive to be useful instruments of the Divine purpose in building this kind of community, one in which men may live together free from the stresses and constraints of desperate living, each person free to seek awareness of his own divinity, then how shall we go about the responsible work of building this community? What must we learn from this Divine Teacher about responsibility and service? How shall we put His teaching into the day-by-day behaviour that will have meaning for this community-building process?

Sai Baba says some very specific things about community-building. First, He says that man shall love God, love himself, love his brothers and sisters, and love all life on earth. This is the basis for all else. Second, He says that love for one's fellow humans is expressed in terms of caring for, compassion, kindliness, service and sharing. Third, He says that the Sai community is a community to be built on the basis of this brotherhood and sisterhood of humans.

Today Baba's devotees are striving to build some elements of the Sai community in hundreds of places, most of them in India and a number in countries such as the U.S. This work is inspired by the hope in individuals that they can share with others the joy of having received Baba's grace, also that they can gain support from, and happily associate with, other devotees who share their love for their Divine Master, and, finally, that together they can serve the larger community, because service has its own personal rewards. They believe as students and thinking people, that the world has a profound need for the teaching Baba is bringing, and that one's daily behaviour will witness to Baba's grace in a meaningful way for one's fellow humans.

What does the term "Sai family" mean? What does "Sai community" mean? The word community is an important word. It has in it elements of communing, communion, communication, communalities, etc. It defines an interdependent relationship between life forms within a given space and time. The term "Sai family" suggests the beauty of Sai Baba's special love for His devotees and of their common possession of His divine grace. It also offers the challenge of building strength, vitality, and deeper meaning into the relations between devotees and offers a glimpse of spiritual life together in the days ahead. It is a very religious idea, and a very beautiful idea.

The concept "Sai community" extends the Sai familial meaning to the larger relations of men. Here the Divine Teacher says something of immense importance to us, almost the hub of the issue. He says that man loves and cares about his family. He must love and care about his village as well. He also must love and care about his human family, the society, of which he is an interdependent part. The safety and well-being of the society and its parts are integrally interconnected.

Sai Baba knows well the powerful urge in humans to experience the deep sense of mutual caring among family members. This is profound. A person thinking about his own family will experience a surge of emotion, usually pleasant emotion, although there sometimes are agony and terror in familial relations as well.

But the family, finally, is a natural place for the expressions of some of the most beautiful feelings that exist among humans. Sai Baba says very simply that the spiritual bliss and joy available to the Sai family members is a possibility for the extended family, the tribe, the village, the neighbourhood, the city and the region, and for the nation, and the world as well. This profound challenge exists to those who follow His teachings. The challenge is to learn how to bring it about, with the help, remember, of His omnipotence and omnipresence.

Sai Baba identified at another time some of the constraints that operate on man in his search for community. He pointed out the relative health, warmth and stability of communal feelings and spiritual oneness in the traditional village community compared with the modern transient, stressed and fragile structure of the city with its anonymous masses, its mobility, its loneliness, alienation, and disruption of normal human relations. Many writers in the last few years have written about this problem. Sai Baba's inspiration tells us that building the Sai community, in the context of modern megapolitan, metropolitan city life, requires the invention of and experimentation with new means of social organization to restore the basic processes of community in these new conditions.

In many parts of the world recent years have seen the diminution of villages and the rapid increase of urbanization. The simple village life, based upon neighbouring, mutual help, cooperative work activities, caring for each other's children, existence of mutual trust, and the simple life centering around the family, neighbours, life in the worship centre and village affairs, is diminished or lost. People are moved into the mass housing of the great urban settlements and community life deteriorates rapidly. their sense of security and well-being in living with each other, their spiritual oneness. They become lonely, frightened, angry, nervous, suspicious city dwellers, distrusting the strangers in their building, bereft of community supports, and living emptier, stressful, anxious lives.

Community organization experts agree that this trend has been an unmitigated disaster in humanistic terms. Many of the students of community values recognize the viability and functionality of cooperative village forms with their communal spiritual culture supported and honoured as an immensely important and deeply rewarding element in the life of the people.

The question is asked, what basis is there in the nature of human personality and character for such a communal way of life? Is man's basic nature communal, cooperative, urged toward mutual sharing, and toward psychological, as well as relational, behavioural interdependence? Or is it not?

Psychologists have argued about man's nature at length. *First,* is man basically individualistic, or basically familial, tribal, communal? *Second,* is man basically competitive, striving for supremacy, dominance, and excellence over others, or basically cooperative, seeking mutuality, common striving and team development? *Third,* is man predominantly kindly, loving, considerate, compassionate and caring for, or combative, aggressive, hostile, assaultive, and angry? *Fourth,* is man basically trusting, confident in self and others, and relying on others, or distrustful, suspicious, relying only on himself?

Of course, man has in him the capability to develop either way. The question is, which comes most naturally to him? It is the writer's belief that cooperation, kindness and love are part of the central makeup of man, and that the opposite tendencies represent weaker and more malignant tendencies rising to the forefront and dominating at times, to the detriment of both the human soul and the welfare of the human community. Sai Baba has repeatedly reminded devotees of the strong spiritual message in ancient Indian teachings, and He has urged devotees to go forth, confident that their basic nature, their ancient culture, and their spiritual self, are in congenial and vital alliance and mutual support of each other, that man's deepest inner self is loving, familial, co-operative, and serving.

This brings us to certain postulates which it is hoped can be agreed upon. First, as Sai Baba says, love is at the heart of human well-being. Second, a new age of love and brotherhood is needed in the world, is imminently reachable by man, and is the human task to build. Third, we must prepare ourselves to participate in the building of this new age, of a new human community. Fourth, preparation and training to build such a community must be a common concern of all of us at this moment.

How, then, does one set about developing the relevant human relation skills, group-building skills, and community-building skills? These skills are attainable with study and practice. The following guidelines may be helpful. They are based on the assumption that interpersonal relations and group life are purposive and goal-oriented, directed toward meaningful rewards to participants. The success of such experiences rests substantially upon the level of self-awareness and other-awareness of participants, upon the level of meaning of communication, of the interactional flow between them, upon the effectiveness of the conduct of their mutual affairs and the effectiveness or productivity of their mutual functioning, in areas such as value-clarification, decision-making, conflict resolution, mutual service, and spiritual reinforcement.

First, consider self-awareness. One can learn self-awareness, to know and be aware of the flow of energy in one's material body and one's ethereal body, and hopefully, eventually, in one's spiritual self. Baba says some very important things at this point to help us grow in awareness. He tells us to be aware of the flow of energy between one's self and the divine reality, most specifically our own Divine Master. He helps each of us also to develop deeper awareness of the divine light in us. He says "You are in Me—I am in You," and one's spirit bounds. Of this one may become more aware. Along with this goes "other-awareness," awareness of the flow of communication and energy between all life forms, particularly the flow of communication, of relationship, between humans.

To increase one's skill in "other-awareness" requires the mobilization of all of one's senses toward an acute sensitivity to the condition and behaviour of other humans with whom one relates. This is fairly complex. First is the discipline of paying attention, giving attention, to the other person. Second, one must train several senses, ears, eyes, smell, taste and tactile sense. Ears need to be tuned up to hear the words, the verbal flow, also to hear tones that tell of affective or emotional flow and other non-verbal clues. Eyes also have to be trained to pick up all the non-verbal data flow, all the postural nuances, facial expressions, body movements.

In addition, there are extra-sensory capabilities which for many of us are unrecognized and undeveloped or atrophied. That is unfortunate, for it denied to us experiences with other planes of existence and energy flow that would have highly important human relational significance. Finally, extending from this, is our sensitivity to and awareness of spiritual flow between humans, and between humans and the divine, between atma and paramatma, the development of which, I am sure, is a concern and hope of all of us, and a promise of our Divine Master.

To be sensitive to this complex data flow at both sensory and extra-sensory levels is incredibly complex, even between two persons, a one-to-one flow. But, consider the problem if the information is coming simultaneously from several senders. I may be in a group of three or five or ten or more. Immediately my receiving apparatus gets flooded and overloaded and I must develop selection, discrimination and focus capabilities. I must scramble to receive, select out, respond, store and otherwise process this unbelievably complex flow. In larger groups the receiver function of each person is based on focus; an extensive selection-rejection system functions with some tuning out and turning off.

There are at least four levels of interactional flow to be aware of in any relational situation. One flow of data is at the mental or idea level and one must be sensitive to this flow. This may be very important to the relationship, may have complex symbolism to which one must pay attention, processing and storing these data to which later response may be indicated, certainly at least a response indicating that one has paid attention and had received the information. One needs also to be sensitive to and picking up data flow at the affective, feeling, or emotional level. This may tell one very important things, understanding of which may be essential to a wholesome and meaningful relationship. Here again a response, both verbal and non-verbal, may be indicated and so one needs to feel with, to empathize with the affective state being communicated and intuitively, perhaps spontaneously, and hopefully with meaning, possibly respond.

There is a complex and meaningful third level of reception, to be called here relational communication. What I receive also are data about the sender's perception of our relationship, what does he think about me, what does he think I think about him, what does he think I think he thinks about me, and so on. This could be pursued more, given time. One needs to be aware of this important flow. Fourth, there is a level of psychic and spiritual energy flow that could readily be separated out for study. What is important is, one hopes to be psychically attuned to and aware of data flow at this level; if the other's spiritual self is sending messages one hopes to be receptive at that level. Baba communicates to listening devotees at that level—it is a level that is available and most important to seekers and devotees.

Communication, thus, both receiving and sending, is very important. One hopes to be an effective sender; one can develop skills and correct weaknesses here also. Clarity is important. Do I communicate what I intend, or do I send double messages at the same or different levels? Do I know what I intend, and do I deliver according to my intention? Do hesitation, confusion, reticence, anxiety, etc. come through non-verbally? Do I strive to conceal or confuse these? Do I intend to be calm and reassuring and instead communicate coldness and withdrawal? Many issues arise here which are worth hours of study. Several principles can be set forth here: openess, honesty, forthrightness, self-disclosure, trust in others, and love. There are more.

Support-building needs to be examined. Building mutual interpersonal and group support structures within the Sai community is important. How does one support and encourage a person's growth of confidence, sense of well-being, and sense of worth, in a relationship? Three kinds of support may be mentioned: emotional, ego and spiritual. One may be able to offer sheer emotional support in terms of encouragement, sympathy, sharing grief, sharing enthusiasm, so that the other person or persons may feel better, more happy, reassured that he or she is not alone, has someone to share with, that it is alright to feel the way one does, that such feelings are understood by me.

Ego support is a somewhat different thing. The ego defines the sense of total self, of one's ability to cope with problems, to manage one's own self, to manage and deal with things about one. This may need some special support, to one's best self, to those forces inside a person which enable one to deal best with one's world, and also to deal with the limits and constraints within the self.

The third area of support is spiritual support, in which one is able to support a person's effort to free himself from earthly bonds and move to higher levels of spiritual awareness and identification with the divine flow in him and around him, and spiritual-level relations with others.

Let us now focus more directly on groups. In India, and to a very limited extent in other countries, groups and centres have been organizing to witness to Baba's grace by meeting together for devotional activities, for social service, and for other activities in their communities—into student groups, village groups, community groups, professional groups, and others the Sai spirit infuses, and in that way the Sai community is advanced.

Each of these groups may be thought of as having two classes of functions, task and maintenance. Task functions involve getting the group's work done. Maintenance functions involve building the group's effectiveness for later tasks, and in enhancing the satisfactions of members in belonging and participating. Task effectiveness is seen in the group's ability to solve problems, make decisions, resolve conflicts, deal with crises, and do planning. Maintenance effectiveness might be seen in the group's ability to deal with issues of membership, issues of member inclusion and exclusion, issues of common goal development, issues of common norms and standards for members and the means for challenging each other to maintain discipline regarding accepted norms, issues of building cohesiveness and morale, of mutual respect and friendship, of mutual service and caring for, of optimalizing the personal rewards, satisfactions and fulfilment members get out of their membership, of deepening relationships between members. Resolving these issues help the group develop Sai familial relations, they may be experienced as a Sai group or Sai community experiences.

A word about leadership. A leader at best is a servant, a facilitator, an enabler, using his or her skills to strengthen, actualize, and improve the participation of all members so that leadership is shared. Shared leadership is the goal, not autocratic, paternalistic, or dictatorial leadership defining domination and submission, or superior-inferior roles. Brotherhood or sisterhood means shared leadership, enhancing each bother's or sister's gifts and talents in serving to his or her best capabilities, each one growing, learning and sharing the satisfactions of the experience.

Another issue to consider is the dependence-interdependence continuum. Think of a continuum from dependence to counter-dependence to independence to interdependence. A group in which dependence upon one or a few persons, who take major responsibility while the rest take less, is weakest, least desirable. A relationship of counter-dependence is likely to occur here in which persons psychologically rebel against dependence and the group has elements pulling and tugging against each other. This may be healthier than overdependence. Independence suggests a group who have settled on relations which give freedom and self-determination to members, and where common elements, decisions, etc. are arrived at by negotiation and compromise. A higher level of group organization is, however, possible—interdependence. At this level members work more closely together interrelatedly. They rely on each other more, work toward effective team work, accent reconciliation of differences and concensus, and reach for higher levels of functioning and relationship.

A final area of group or community effectiveness to consider briefly will identify four task functions: problem-solving, decision-making, conflict resolution and planning.

Problem-solving is the process by which a group perceives a problem, collects data to clarify and illuminate the problem, analyzes its components, projects alternate solutions or action options, assesses the probable outcomes of each option, chooses an option, acts on it, obtains feedback regarding the outcomes, and evaluates the new situation in order to reorganize if necessary.

Decision-making is related to problem solving, involving similar clarification and analysis of a problem and exploration of options and their outcomes, and deciding which option to act on. At this point decision-making can be carried on in several ways, with varying outcomes: (*i*) The decision can be forced on the group by forceful action of a strong person or sub-group, resulting in dependence, anger and dissatisfaction with the decision by members. (*ii*) It may be manipulated, an equally unfortunate event. (*iii*) The decision can be arrived at by a majority vote so that the majority are satisfied and the minority are perhaps dissatisfied. (*iv*) The decision can be arrived at by concensus, which strives for the highest level of agreement possible, 100 per cent if possible, and the least dissatisfaction.

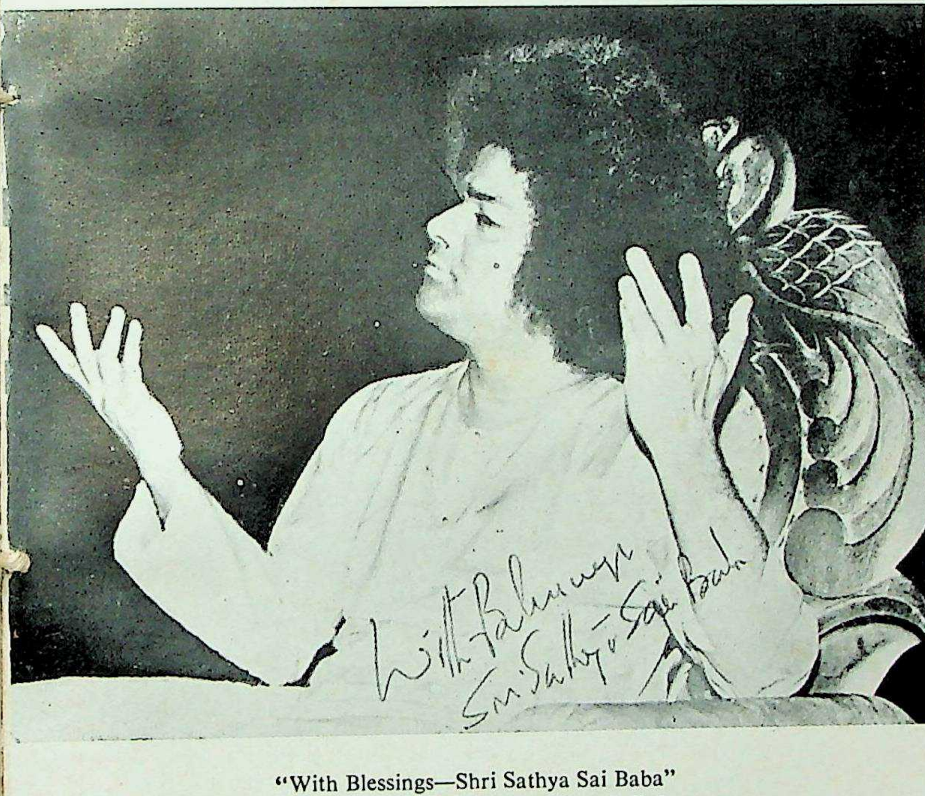
Decision by concensus is often, but not always, more difficult, for it introduces the idea of searching for a decision which will get agreement and commitment from the largest possible percentage, and this means searching more carefully for a way to go that will get the fullest support. I am in favour of the concensus principle operating as far as possible because of the greater power that comes to a group when the maximum number of members have a sense of ownership in the decision and the action, and mutual pride in their concensus.

Conflict resolution is a special group task. There are honest differences, desire for dominance or power, emotional conflicts, and other elements, all possibly operating. Resolution may come through force, domination or pressure, through manipulation and pseudo-compromise, through negotiation and compromise with more or less integrity, or through reconciliation, in which a deeper-reaching effort is made to resolve the difficulty to the highest satisfaction of the greatest number by searching for all means of reconciling the differences. I trust most the reconciliatory strategy, as I trust most the concensus method of decision-making and the shared leadership concept in group task functioning.

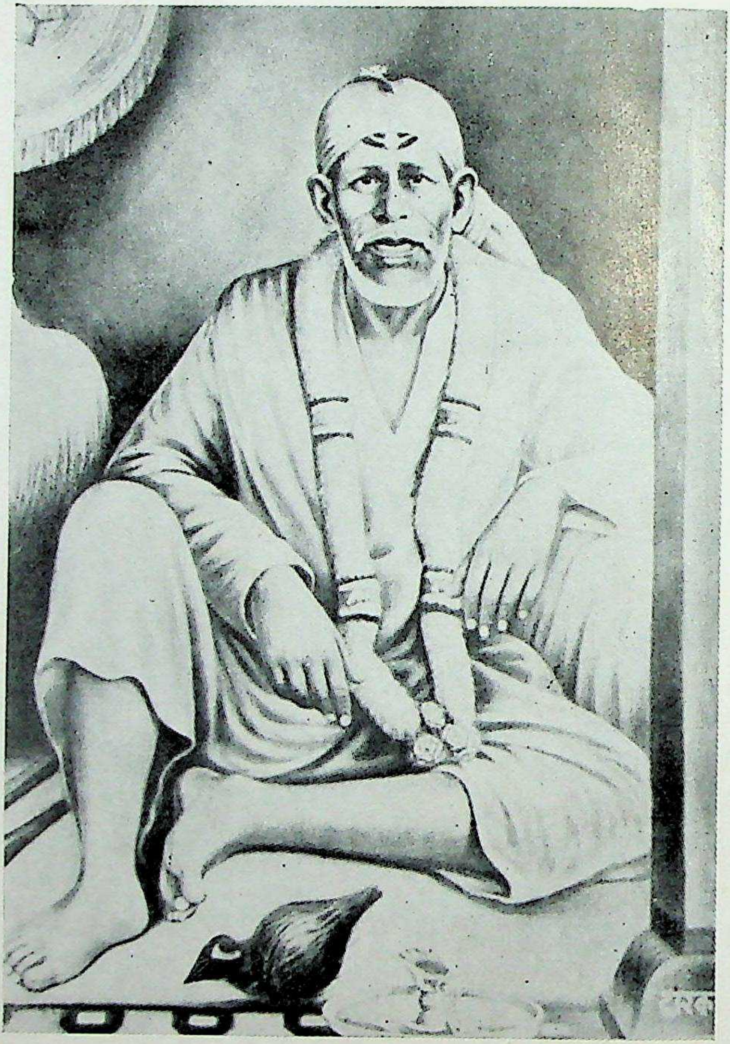
Planning, a very significant group task, has an extensive modern research and theory of its own which will not be summarized here. Perhaps it may be useful to point out simply that both proactive and reactive planning may be required, that goal-setting, use of creative imagination, the functioning of vision and "optimal possibility" explorations, are all part of the planning function.

Such a review as this, brief and superficial as it must be, may suggest useful principles to guide those seeking to help our communities and groups to strengthen their organization and functioning. They are tools for building communities. And when such groups and communities have as their core values the Sai values of truth, right conduct, peace and love between humans, and have the undergirding of Sathya Sai Baba's grace, one can appreciate the depth of joy and of meaning that these bring.

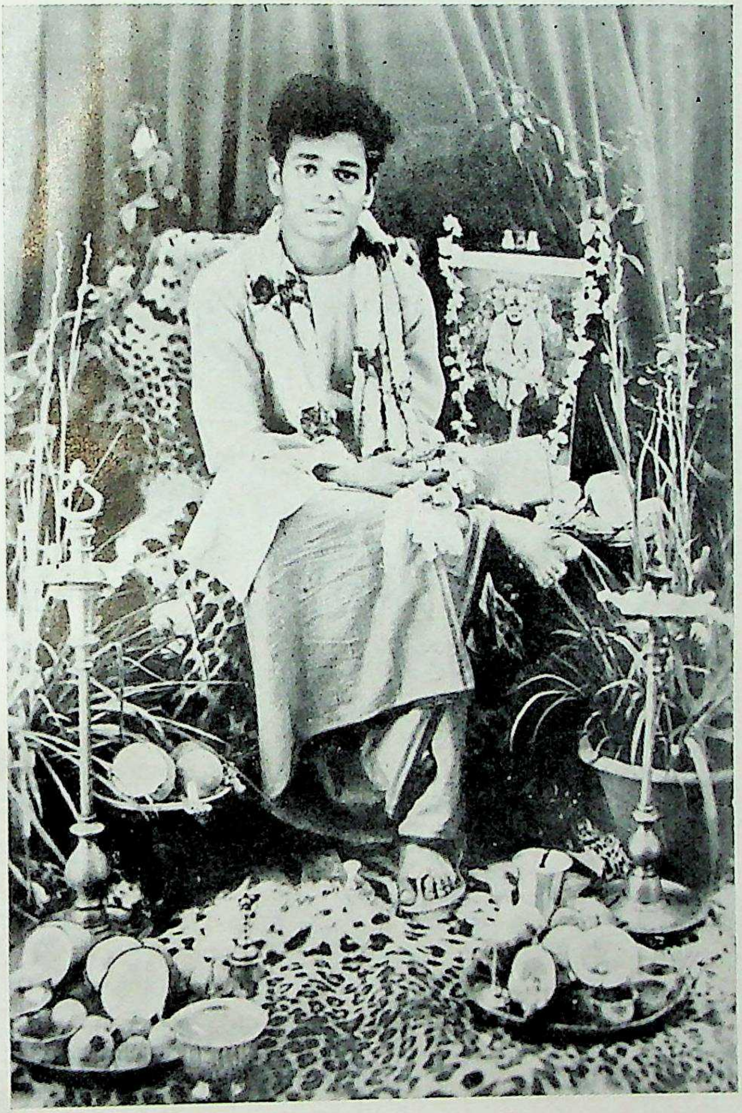
Building the Sai community requires of devotees the discipline of responsible action, attention to the complex and dynamic forces and processes at work, and skill in expending one's energy most effectively in the service functions integral to community building. Such activities also bring to the builders the immense rewards of reflecting in some very small way the divine light and inspiration of the Teacher and Master.



"With Blessings—Shri Sathya Sai Baba"
[Courtesy: Mr V. A. Oze, New Delhi]



Shri Sai Baba of Shirdi—the previous incarnation of the present Sai Baba
[Courtesy: Dr S. N. Bose, New Delhi]

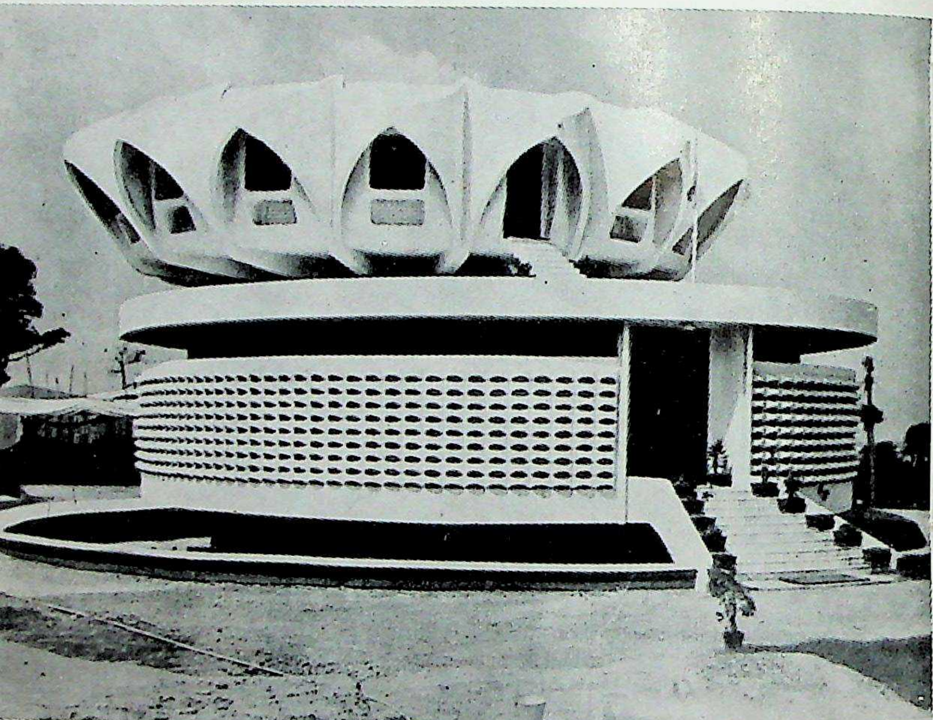


Sai Baba as an adolescent
[Courtesy: Miss Anima Mukerji, Jaipur]

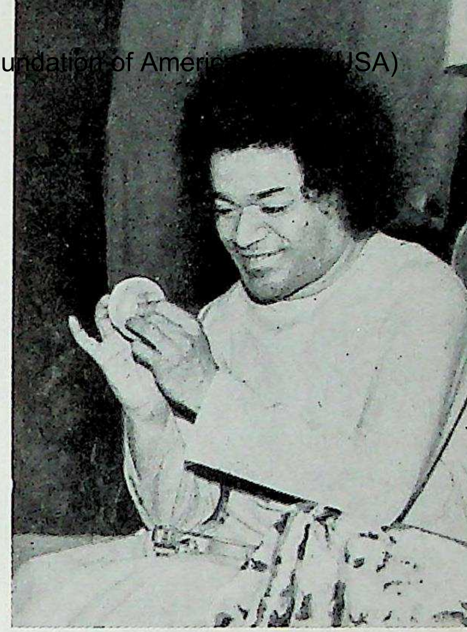
Sai Baba as a youngman
[Courtesy: Dr S. N. Bose, New Delhi]

Sai Baba in the midst of a dramatic troup of the students of Shri Sathya Sai College for Women, Anantapur (A.P.)

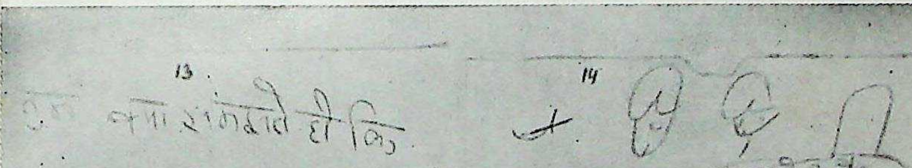
[Courtesy: Dr Hemalatha, Anantapur]



Dharmakshetra—International centre of Sai activities at Andheri, Bombay
[Courtesy: Mr Hari Haran, New Delhi]



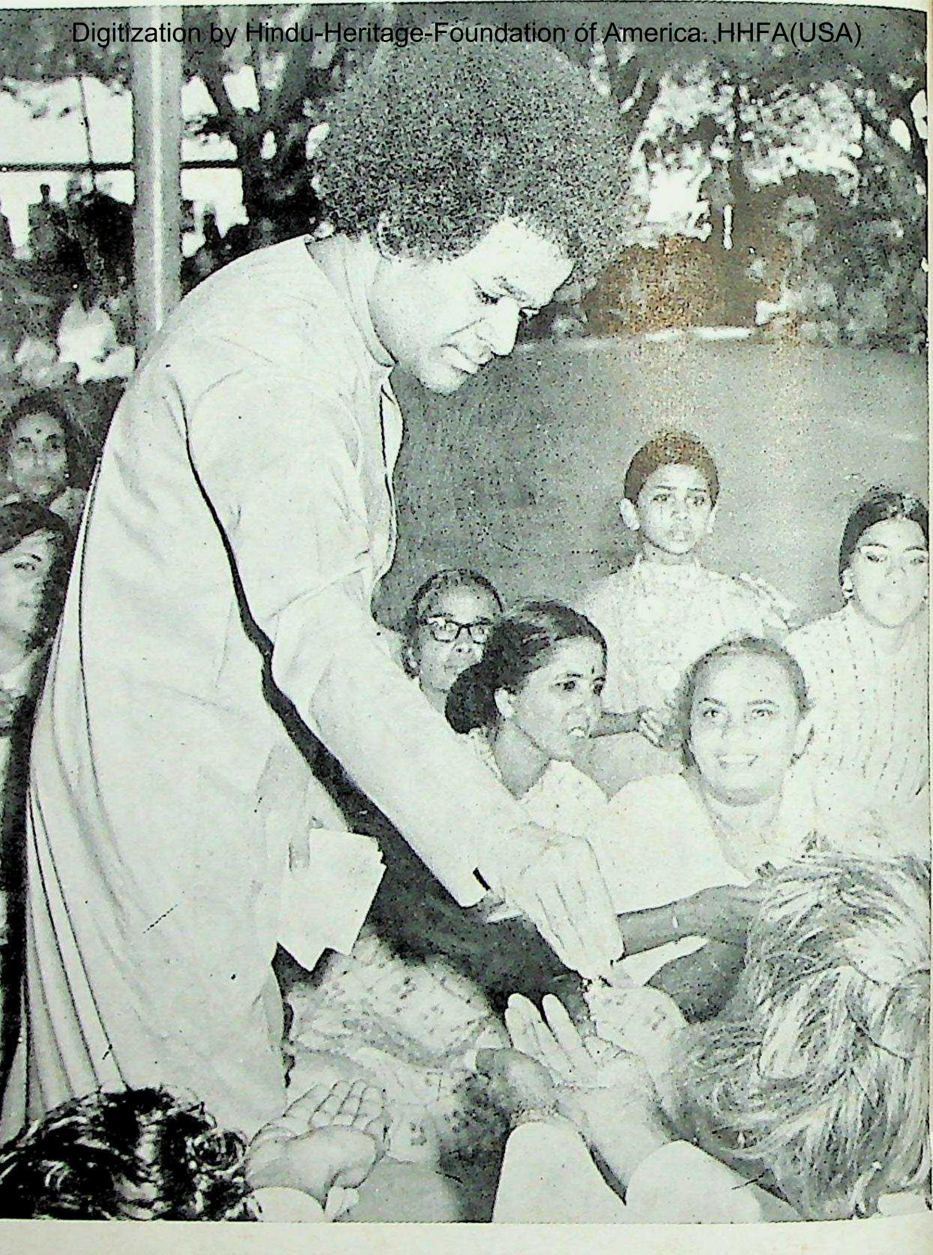
Sai Baba enjoying a Bhajan session
[Courtesy: Smt Sunder Singh, New Delhi]



13

क्या समझते हो कि
यह सब जैसा जैसी करते
हो होता है सब दिखाई
देती कैसा क्या बना है।
ही बन्द नहीं होंगे
और राख की घर में
नहीं रखा जैसा लिख
कर व आती है। [illegible]
तुम्हारे को बहुत ही ज्यादा

Sai Baba's miraculous Messages appearing in the house of 11-year-old Nina
[Courtesy: Mr R. P. Gupta, New Delhi]



Sai Baba materialising and giving Vibhuti to a devotee in
His Brindavanam Ashram in June 1974
[Courtesy: Mr P. S. Varma, New Delhi]

14. DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN

SHRI SATHYA SAI BABA

Education confers humility, endows one with the authority to command; that will entitle him to affluence. With the help of this affluence, charity and compassion can be made fruitful, and by this means, happiness in this world and peace in the next can be won. Education is thus a great constructive force for mankind.

But reformers and reconstructionists have tinkered so much with the process of education that it has now been reduced to a caricature of itself. The effectiveness of the educational system, and the boons it could confer on man have been ignored and neglected; the same is now given to the art of collecting information of the objective world. The far more important task of transforming the nature of man into the divine is given up as beyond its ken or beneath its role.

The difference between the ancient ideals of education and the modern practices is appalling. Today, the educational process is denied to the aspirant if he falls to pay his fees. The teacher too feels that he has no duty to teach, if in a certain month he is not paid his salary. Students pay for being taught; teachers are paid for the teaching they do. Money decides what is taught and how it is learnt. "Pay and receive; be paid and give." That is the bond between the teacher and the taught. "Love, reverence, affection" these have no place in the transaction.

How then can education be fruitful? When teachers love the children, they will be rewarded by the love of the children who sit around them. Now they are loved for the sake of the money they bring, and so the relationship is artificial and without roots in the heart.

The teacher and the pupil will both be immersed in joy only when love that does not calculate the reward binds them together. When material gain is the goal, the joy is based on matter and does not thrill the mind. It cannot be pure, steady and sincere.

Teachers who do not look forward to monetary or material benefit have ample opportunity to make the child's heart and intellect blossom, through the shining rays of love. Let me tell you that most of the teachers of today have specialized in western types of training, and so they have lost their moorings in our own culture, and are unaware of the deeper springs of the spirit.

They have been rendered materialistic, worldly, and egoistic. They are caught up in the pursuit of sensual pleasure and in the earning of money with that objective in view. They do not know that real education consists in helping the child to manifest the divinity already latent in him. Remember that the children who come to you are all heirs to the richest cultural heritage that the world can give. They are the "Children of Immortality" extolled as such in the ancient texts by sages and scholars of this land.

Do not turn them into experts in mathematics, unable to add up a simple domestic bill; scholars in the geography of America, but unable to direct a pilgrim who desires to know in which direction Kasi lies; prodigies in algebra who are helpless when asked to define the area of their own homes; past masters in drill and gymnastics, but all at sea when requested to sit in the Padmasana posture; proficient in botany, but ignorant of the significance and uses of the common tulsi plant, found in the courtyard of every Indian home! They can draw realistic pictures of dogs and foxes, but their handwriting remains an illegible scribble. How can we expect that Indian culture will be preserved and fostered by these products of our educational system? The teachers who have brought them to this pass, and the educational administrators who devised the system are both equally to blame.

Correction of these faults must start with the teachers; they must become aware of the high purpose of education, and the goal to which it must guide the children of the land.

I must say that there is a great and urgent need for teachers to receive training in the methods of child education. For example, when teaching the recitation of bhajans or poems or hymns, you have to pay attention to the correct enunciation of each sound, the correct pronunciation of each letter; for, otherwise, the meaning is liable to be warped out of recognition.

In olden times, teachers took particular care to explain to the pupils the origins and roots of each new word, even of words like Sah, and Thwam. They taught not only the meaning of the word, but delved into its roots, and opened up before the people a vast vista of related words and a huge expanse of meaningful vocabulary. Since words in Indian languages get transformed when written or pronounced in conjunction with other words, it is the teachers' duty to teach how they are to be separately recognised and identified.

Boys may write *Ramunithoka pivarudu itlaniye* (meaning, "Rama's tail, Pivara spoke thus," which is absurd), instead of *Ramunitho kapivaruditlaniye* (meaning, "To Rama the lord of monkeys spoke thus," which is quite correct). The word, *Santha Pakodilu*, which I once used to indicate the error involved when people desert the true path and pursue degrading objective pleasures, which I compared to the *pakodilu* (savouries) sold in *santha* (village markets during fairs and festivals), for they attract by their colour and ruinous components and destroy health. Kasturi who did not know much Telugu, divided the word into *santhapa* and *kodilu*, making the meaning absurd, for *kodilu* means fowls, and *santhapa*, like *pivarudu* has no meaning at all, being a mere jumble of sounds! Unless training is given in reading aloud, with concurrent attention to the meaning of the words and phrases, such mistakes are bound to recur. The three R's are the skills most neglected today.

Writing has also to be taught well, for the knowledge of the correct form of each letter has to be mastered by all. Or else, even here, a tiny slip might change a sublime idea into ridiculous jargon. *Rishikoti* when written wrongly in Telugu, as a consequence of the omission of a single upward curve was once misshaped into "bush-coat", and the whole sentence was rendered ridiculous thereby! Scrupulous care and steady attention alone can make the pupils avoid such errors.

One point I have to emphasize here is, that teachers should be careful, while handling some books being published for school use by so-called scholars, at the present time, that cast doubts on the truth of the great epics, like the *Ramayana* and assert that Dasaratha and Ravana did not exist in authentic history. They characterize them as representatives or symbols of opposing cultures, the Aryan and the Non-Aryan, and sow the seeds of factionalism and hatred. By such writings, children begin to doubt the very foundations of goodness, truth and beauty; they are confused while deciding on right conduct and behaviour, right ideals and ways of living.

A teacher examines every story or account that he places before the children from the point of view of individual faith and social harmony. Does this lead the child to a better, a more harmonious, a more God-oriented life? That is the question you should ask yourself. Prahlada has beautifully summed up this principle in the verse he utters in the Bhagavatha, while advising his playmates on the disciplines that should be welcomed. "The study of books that describe the glory of God is the study that is best worthwhile. The preceptor who tells us about the glory of God is the perceptor to be sought after and revered. The father who directs you to approach God is the father who deserves the reverence and obedience of the children, not the others."

Hills and mountains are overlaid with rock and boulder. The sculptor gathers them, and shapes each of them into something useful and beautiful, depending upon the nature and characteristics of the stone. Out of one boulder, the artisan might carve a huge mortar and pestle to be kept in the corner of the kitchen of a populous home. Out of another, the sculptor might produce a rough hewn gargoyle hung on a building as an eerie object to ward off the evil eye. A third stone might get transformed into a charming little danseuse to embellish the shelf of a museum. Another stone, catching the eye and attention of a skilled sculptor might be elevated into the idol of a divine manifestation, fit to be installed in a temple where it receives the adoration of millions for generations.

Though they were the progeny of one peak, each has a different destiny, depending upon the care and consecration bestowed on it by the sculptor. Teachers are the sculptors who shape the rocks into things of beauty and significance, of utility and inspiration. They study the pupils, their nature and equipment, and decide on their roles in society, their paths, and the stages in their progress.

But, it must be pointed out that the sculptor or teacher is not the only factor to be reckoned with in the process of education. The mother and father of the child too have important roles in the process. The positive and the negative must both meet in order to produce the electric current; even God needs the yearning and the endeavour of the devotee to fulfil His Will to save him from perdition. You may have flowers, and a length of string and a needle too; but, without the garland maker, how can the flowers become strung on the string? You may have a lamp, oil and wicks; but, you can get light only when someone strikes a flame and lights the lamp.

So too, the teacher and the pupil have to be brought to each other and encouraged to learn and teach, to share lovingly their knowledge and experience with the parents, so that education might proceed and the child inherit the heritage of its forefathers. The teacher must win the reverence of the pupil by showering on him his love; the pupil must win the love of the teacher by showering on him reverence and affection. It is a mutual transaction, a sharing of the emotions of the heart. How can a proper congenial atmosphere for study and teaching be built on a foundation of doubt and hatred? Nowadays, the atmosphere is polluted by the teachers' fear and suspicion, and the hostility and audacity of the students. There is no love to lubricate the relations between the teacher and the taught.

We have heard the guru being praised as equal to God Himself. The guru is referred to reverentially, as Brahma, the first of the trinity entrusted with creation, as Vishnu, the second of the trinity entrusted with the preservation and protection of creation, and as Maheswara, the last of the trinity, charged with destruction and dissolution. This description is symbolically correct, as we can see when we analyze the work which the teacher or guru is expected to carry out. The guru sows the seeds of virtue, of wisdom, and of faith in the heart of the pupil.

He is, therefore, Brahma, of the nature of the creator. He is like the farmer who plants sapplings in the well-prepared soil of his field. But the farmer does not sit with folded hands, thereafter. He takes incessant care to see that the saplings grow, vigorously and well, and he is vigilant to water the growing crops and feed them with fertilizers at the appropriate stage of growth. This is the role of Vishnu, so far as education and the educator are concerned. The guru cannot sit back and silently watch the fate of the pupil, after the first few lessons. He has to guide the pupil at every step, foster and encourage good habits, sound reasoning and valid emotions, and act as Vishnu, the second of the trinity.

The guru has also the duty cast on him, to watch every step of the pupil, and warn him when he takes a false step, develops bad habits, or entertains doubt. Like the farmer who has to be vigilant against the growth of weeds or the upsurge of pests, the guru too must be ever alert to destroy the pests or vice and the weeds of sloth and unsteadiness. The word "teacher" cannot denote these high roles; it can mean only those who transmit information, and train in skills. Teachers or gurus must always be conscious of the spiritual role which they have taken on, and its responsibilities and value. They are the lamps from which the tender hearts of the young must receive light and love. By their adherence to truth, righteousness, peace, and love, they have to inspire these qualities in the children that come to them and the homes from where they come.

There are many who shiver at the prospect, when they contemplate the future of this great country. You should never entertain such doubts and fears. For you are the builders of that future and you know that it will be glorious. The Bal Vikas children whom teachers are guiding and inspiring will be the leaders of tomorrow in this land. The virtues teachers implant in them, the counsel they provide, the examples they set will remain carved in their memories and transform their outlook and behaviour in the days to come.

If I ask anyone whether he can bring back to memory the book that he read this morning, 95 per cent of people will fail this test. But, ask them to repeat from memory some one hymn or sloka that their grandfather or grandmother taught them when they were little children sitting on the knees of the elders, and I am sure 95 per cent of you will be able to recite the sloka or stotra. The things learnt during those early years stick in the memory and act subtly and silently on the growing mind to modify and purify the conduct of later years.

Some short-sighted critics declare that spiritual matter should not be communicated to children, for they are too young and inexperienced to benefit by the instruction. But, if a thing deserves to be done, the sooner we set about it the better. The slogan, "Start early, drive slowly, reach safely" applies not merely to journeys by road or rail, it applies also to the journey from untruth to truth, from darkness towards light and from death to immortality.

The unrest, anxiety, fear, and hatred that torment the world now is largely due to the neglect which kept off from the growing child the discipline that can regulate the passions and emotions of man. We postpone this essential task of education at our peril, for when children are equipped with the discipline to secure balance, equanimity, harmony, and peace, they can no more be drawn into wild adventures and barren activities. One should learn spiritual discipline along with the information-giving subjects of the curriculum. One has to earn the high diploma which the Upanishads offer you, namely, Amrthasya Putra, Child of Immortality, along with the degrees M.A., B.Sc., etc., which help one to eke out a livelihood, up to a certain stage in life.

But remember you cannot take up the threads of spiritual sadhana all of a sudden after retiring from active service! You cannot learn spiritual sadhana, when you are physically debilitated and overwhelmed by the approach of death. How can a man think of God, his Saviour when he himself is overcome by sorrow at the need to depart from this world and when all around him his kith and kin are weeping and wailing loud and long?

No. Everyone must learn the secret of happiness, which consists of refusing to shed tears for anything less than God. You have won this human body, this human life, as the reward for many lives spent in acquiring merit. You have won this chance, this unique good fortune of being able to get darshan of Sai plunging deep into the waters of this tumultuous ocean of samsara, you have heroically emerged from its depths, with this rare Pearl in your hands —the grace of Sai. Do not allow it to slip out of your clasp and fall into the depths again. Hold on firmly to it. Pray that you may have it for ever and be filled with the joy that it confers. That is the way by which you can render this lucky life fruitful.

Teachers should instruct children to revere their parents. This is the first thing to do. It is a simple act of gratitude for those who endowed them with the material instrument for life. But mere possession of the human body, however wonderful it may be, is not enough for one's peace and joy. One must know how to unravel its mysteries and regulate one's own impulses and hungers. This process is accomplished by the guru, and so the pupils must be instructed and encouraged to revere the guru, in gratitude for the service he renders. Education must aim at providing the child, not livelihood, but a life worth living. For this, the acquisition of skills in doing or reasoning is not enough. Faith in oneself and in the divinity of oneself are absolutely essential. That is the precious treasure of wisdom, stored in our ancient scriptures and in the experience of the saints and sages of all countries and faiths.

There is one more point, which I wish to emphasize. Some teachers have asked me whether the Bala Vikas classes should serve children of all faiths or whether they should admit only children of the Hindu faith. This question has arisen because the questioners do not know the very fundamentals of the Hindu faith. There is only one religion, remember, and that is the religion of love; there is only one caste, and that is the Caste of Humanity. You must be careful not to encourage or entertain the slightest trace of difference in the basis of religion, caste, creed or colour, in the Bal Vikas classes.

Do not tarnish the spotlessly clean minds of children by creating distinction between one child and another. Impart instruction and inspiration equally to all. Select stories from the scriptures of all faiths to interest children in the values of good life. Speak to them of the moral heroes of all lands, the Saints of all faiths. For they are all of the same stamp. No scripture enjoins violence or lays down untruth as a way of life. All religions extol truth, righteousness, peace, brotherhood, and love. All saints are embodiments of service, compassion, and renunciation.

Do not compare the various manifestations of the Divine and pronounce judgement, declaring that Rama is greater than Krishna or Shiva superior to Vishnu. This line of thought is poisonous and harmful to the devout aspirant. You do not know your own self. How dare you pronounce judgement on personalities and powers you have never experienced or understood? Rama is as unknown to you as Christ, and so, it is best to keep silent, and revere both with equal ardour, for all are manifestations of the same divine effulgence.

I bless you that you succeed in the great task you have imposed on yourself, and that you will be able to light the way for the tender-footed children of this land into the glorious region of everlasting joy.

15. EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION IN THE SAI AGE

DR S.P. RUHELA

I have the great fortune of being under the Divine Grace of Bhagvan Sai Baba since April 1973. My study of His writings and His discourses heard by me at Puttaparti at the occasion of Shiva-Ratri in 1974 and my total belief in His Divinity and the stature of the greatest *Sad Guru* of the times, have proved to be of an immense help to me in viewing this crucial theme in a proper socio-philosophical perspective.

There is a widespread criticism that education as a social institution in most countries, particularly in India, has utterly failed to deliver the goods. We have heard about the miserable failures of the educational efforts in Hitler's Germany, Mussolini's Italy, and King Hirohito's Japan in several awe-creating and hair-raising accounts. We are now hearing about the dysfunctionality of the American system of education for the American society from an American, Alvin Toffler, in his thrilling book *Future Shock*. Intellectuals in Delhi were some time back exposed to the so called "revolutionary" ideas of Evan Illich, the Mexican author of a controversial book *Deschooling Society*. His ideas have echoed the failure of the Mexican system of education. Everett Reimer's book *School is Dead* is yet another testimony to it. The well-known Brazilian soldier-revolutionary Paulo Friere has already come out with his revolutionary book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which proclaims that education in developing countries like Brazil (and also India) has become one of the major instruments for the maintenance of the "culture of silence" of the dispossessed or oppressed masses. There are innumerable books, articles and research studies by scholars and public men in India, which testify the naked fact that the present-day educational system in our country has belied all hopes, and is in need of immediate attention, or as Bhagvan says, "operation."

Why Today's Educational System Does Not Work

Several causes for the dysfunctionality, worthlessness, or inability of the current educational systems to meet the goals of societies in their specific contexts have been advanced by countless people of different backgrounds and of different group-interests. Teachers blame politicians for this, while politicians blame teachers and social planners. Students blame educational administrators and teachers, and *vice versa*. The poor parents blame the rich parents and middle class parents for grabbing all educational facilities, while the latter blame the former for lowering the standards of education. The teachers and students have also learnt the politician's art of verbalizing or slogan-mongering and of staging bandhs, gheraos, strikes and acts of violence in advance of their discovering reasons for them. The religious people and elders in society are blaming the Western-educated scientists, teachers, and educational bureaucrats for imposing on us academic colonialism and a set of false or pseudo-modern values and banishing religion and morality. India's proverbial poverty is an often-quoted factor. In sum, everybody is trying to make the other group a scapegoat for the educational failures of our country, which have now created a frightening "cultural crisis" for all of us today.

While all these causes or factors are true, in my view the most important or the most fundamental cause of the failure of education as a social institution in most countries of the free world in general is that our social sciences have so far failed to evolve a proper conception of man and society, and of the role education has to play therein.

Education in itself is no discipline. It is based on foundational disciplines—mostly philosophy, sociology and psychology. In modern sociology and social psychology, we have certain dominant conceptions of man and society, and these conceptions of the reality of man and society have been the bases on which our modern education has functioned and failed.

As I studied Bhagvan Shri Sathya Sai Baba's writings during the last one year, I have discovered to my great surprise, shock and embarrassment that we, the so-called social scientists, have for long been labouring under great ignorance and confusion about the real nature of man and society. It is our intellectual blindness, arrogance, and the facade of scientism worn by us, that has been responsible for giving an erroneous direction to social institutions. like education.

Sai Baba's Views About the Real Nature of Man and Society

(*i*) The overall impression one gains from the study of the sociological, psycho-analytical and socio-psychological conceptions about man is that he is basically an animal with a debased nature, full of hatred, envy, egoism and asanthi. While an earlier school of psychology considered him to be a mere creature of instincts, the most popular modern school of psychology treats him as a creature of motives and drives, most of which are egoistic and hence unsocial or unethical. It is this distrust about the basic nature of man which has been the latest guiding principle in education. Since long, in actual practice most of our teachers and parents have dealt with the child or the student thinking him to be a nuisance, or a mini devil. Our methods of disciplining the child and of examining students betrays this hidden principle frought with horrible consequences. The school has become, in Dr. Zakir Husain's words, "an invention of some devil." Isn't it the root cause of the widespread inter-generational conflict today?

Bhagvan Sai Baba totally rejects this conception of man when

He proclaims:

> You should not delude yourself by imagining that you are the centre of disquiet and untruth, know that you are the embodiment of peace, that love is the very blood in you, that your very nature is joy. Realise this by actual practice and experience.
>
> ....You enquire of another the reason why he is depressed; you are not worried if he looks happy, why? Because depression is unnatural; it is against man's real nature.
>
> ....Man is divine, take it from Me; he is really here on a holy mission, for a divine purpose. Man must earn his birthright, namely *santhi*. *Asanthi* is for him the unnatural state. His real nature is *santhi*.

(*ii*) The most dominant school of thought about society in sociology today is what is called the Conflict School of Thought or the Conflict Model of Society, accordingly to which "the basic condition for social life is dissension, arising through the competition for power and advantage between the two groups."[1] The Marxian contributions to the sociology of social stratification and sociology of knowledge are based on the theory of tension or conflict among the social classes, which has created endless distrust and tensions among people of different social class origins. This theory has led Marx to decry religion as "an evidence of resignation in the face of oppression,"[2] or the "opium of the poor."

I am not exaggerating in remarking that more than half of the current Sociology (as well as Political Science) is nothing but the glamourized picture of the theories of class tensions and group-conflicts authored by Marxists, Marxists-Leninists, Neo-Marxist and the like. There is perhaps no room for God in this conception of the world built up by these theories. We social scientists have but to feed ourselves on the currently fashionable diet of these theories of conflict which generate asanthi, tension, violence and all sorts of disjunctive social processes. We have becomes habituated to derive hedonistic pleasure out of these tensions. So great is the force of these fascist tendencies in the sphere of the sociology of knowledge!

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[1] Alex Inkeles, *What is Sociology?* Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1955, pp. 38-39.

[2] Betty R. Scharf, *The Sociological Study of Religion*, Hutchinson University Library, London, 1970, p. 84.

Which way will this conception of human society passed on to us by Marxists and the other votaries of the Conflict school of thought ultimate lead us to? This is a fundamental question for us all to ponder over. I personally have no political leanings and so I have no answer to give to this question.

Bhagvan Shri Sathya Sai Baba gave an emphatic reply to it to one of my friends and an erstwhile colleague, Dr B.S. Goel, Reader in the Department of Textbooks, National Institute of Education, NCERT, New Delhi, in the course of the early stage of his meditation. Dr. Goel was a very staunch and aggressive Marxist of several years standing. But then, inspired by Baba in his meditation and guided by Him at every stage, he changed greatly and wrote a monumental work entitled *Psycho-Analysis and Meditation—The Philosophy and Religion of Life*. It reveals to the world how Karl Marx and Freud have failed to lead man to the reality of his existence, and how through meditation the modern man can in fact achieve the supreme goal of his life. This is what Bhagvan Shri Sathya Sai Baba said to my friend Dr. Goel in his meditation:

> Do you know why I made you a Marxist? I made you a Marxist so that you may understand its language, its dilectics and its real meaning as are being preached and practised by a number of people in the world. I kept you to be a Marxist for

> ten years for this purpose.
>
> ....Marxist thought and psycho-analytical thought are spreading fast among the people. They do not represent Me. They represent ignorance about the original human nature. *None guided by these thoughts will ever reach Me. None would become happy in the real sense by these thoughts.* You tell the suffering people all this. You expose the limitations and untruth of these streams of thought. You tell the people to return to Me again to fulfil themselves....[3]

Many of our teachers and our so-called radical educationists and educational planners and administrators, who are mere puppets in the politicians' hands, have been trying to inject Communist ideology in the content of education to be provided to the children of our nation in the name of "socialism through education." What will be the future of our younger generation, for Bhagvan has emphatically proclaimed "None guided by these thoughts will ever reach Me?" The conclusion is very clear—we as a nation are destined to suffer unless we correct our perspective at the earliest.

While all this talk of Godlessness, social class tensions, and asanthi in the fashionable world of ideas is the current fad, Baba's prescription is:

> It is only when God is the Goal and Guide, that there can be real Peace, Love, and Truth.
>
> It is the duty of man to see in society the expression of Divinity and to use all his skills and efforts to promote the welfare and prosperity of society.
>
> The brotherhood of man can be translated into life only on the basis of the Atmic vision.... All are one Atma (Baba).

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[3] B.S. Goel, *Psycho-analysis and Meditation—The Psychology, Philosophy and Religion of Life* (Unpublished manuscript, p. 12).

Baba has repeatedly instructed us not to hate or envy people on the basis of their wealth, position, religion, castes or social or cultural status. This enjoins upon teachers and students to leave their class prejudices in their mutual interaction and to work sincerely in the direction of developing healthy, pious and non-violent social contexts of teaching and learning in schools, colleges, universities, homes and in all other agencies or areas of socialization.

(*iii*) Freud, the great psycho-analyst of the world (who considered the libido or sex instinct to be the driving force of all human activities) reached merely this conclusion in his thinking that to meet death is the only ultimate desire of a man. Sai Baba's philosophy and psychology of meditation, on the contrary, enjoins upon us to believe that since every person is a divine spark born out of the Supreme Soul, his or her highest or ultimate desire is to merge with the Supreme soul, that is God or the Supreme Ananda. And that is why in meditation, great emphasis is laid on performing the backward journey, at the completion of which "you will turn your face towards the cosmic energy, or God again would be transcended and the gates of the senses would be closed, as Jesus said."[4]

(*iv*) The current sociology and social psychology very heavily rests on a theory called the Theory of Reference Groups. According to it, it is not the individual who can freely decide his role-performance or behaviour, but it is actually the whole mass of expectations, positive or negative, of his reference group, i.e. people or groups surrounding him cognitively or mentally, which dictates his choice of behaviour or role-functioning in the society. The importance of the individual in chartering his own course of action freely and intelligently is thus belittled in this connection.

On the other hand, Sai Baba lays a great deal of emphasis on the inner promptings of one's soul, conscience or God, which must be cautiously heard in one's prayers and meditation, and which must become the main levers or springs of social action. Man should exercise his own viveka (sense of discrimination) and act with a high sense of responsibility; he must have the dignity of an enlightened leader. He must refuse to be a mere pawn, slave, or scapegoat in the hands of others. Baba instructs us thus: "Do not shape your conduct according to the opinion of others. Instead, follow bravely, gladly and steadily the rational promptings of your own awakened conscience, your own inner self."

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[4] Goel, *op. cit.*

(*v*) The overall emphasis of sociology has been on treating society as the basic unit of analysis. According to it, it is the society which provides the basic incentive, guidance, help, and control for the social actions of individuals, and hence society is more important than the individual. In political science, there has long been a somewhat similar controversy going on: is the State for the individual or the individual for the State? We find that the individual has clearly been degraded to a considerably lower position than society and state in both these perspectives of sociology and political science, and this has created problems.

Baba's writings emphasize a balance between the individual and the society, for both are inextricably intertwined. However, Baba seems to emphasize that the individual must be the basic unit of analysis, action, reform, reconstruction, or development of society. All strength to society, all changes in society, must necessarily flow from the introspection and meditation of the individual on to the society. To quote Baba:

> What has sociology or social sciences to do with the science of the Spirit or the inquiry into the human Spirit? ....No society can find its fulfilment, no social ideal can fructify without the blossoming of the spirit of man."[5]

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[5] Sai Baba, "Social Life and Atmic Sadhana—A Message," in *Sanatan Sarathi* (Vol. XVII, No. 2), April 1974, pp. 40-43.

(*vi*) Sociologists generally start with the main point that a commonality of interests (vested interest) usually bind people in the society. That is the basis of their social solidarity. Although this seems to be true to an extent, let us not forget that the extent, depth, or strength of this sort of social solidarity in social groups —whether they are political parties, bureaucratic cliques, friendly circles, caste groupings or whole communities, are bound to be limited, shallow, and elastic or flexible. According to Baba, the atmic principle is the only true, reliable, and permanent principle of social solidarity.

(*vii*) Modern physical sciences as well as social sciences lay great emphasis on empiricism, i.e., believing only in pratyaksha and rationality. We have been indoctrinated by these sciences to believe in only what we can see or experience with our senses, and what we can reason logically.

Baba has, through His innumerable miracles (which have baffled scientists all over the world) as well as through His analyses and in His divine discourses, very convincingly demonstrated that we have actually hitherto relied upon very unreliable notions of empiricism and logic or rationality. For the spirituality or knowledge about the soul, God, and related matters cannot be understood thereby. Baba says:

> Do not be misled by what you see; what you do not see with your eyes is much more significant.
>
> ....Scientists, on account of some selfish aspirations and with a view to acquiring certain advantages for themselves, have introduced in their methodology a disbelief in God. You should not accept such rules and say that nothing can be truth unless you are able to have prathyaksha as your authenticity.[6]

(*viii*) Social psychology and sociology are expressing their pride by demonstrating how the ego-identity of the individual can be formed, fomented, and expanded. Erik Erikson's writings on the subject of identity formation and individuation and the writings of social scientists on the subject of personality development impress educators very much.

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[6] Bhagvan Shri Sathya Sai Baba, *Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1972*, Bombay, Shri Sathya Sai Education Foundation, 1973, p. 54.

Baba's instructions are that if everlasting santhi (peace), ananda (happiness) and Iswaranugraha (God's grace) are to be achieved by man, he must constantly strive to reduce his ego till it is completely destroyed and thereby he attains mokshya or salvation. Clearly, the reduction of ego has hitherto remained a subject outside the ken of the interest of the social scientists and educationists. Our present-day power politics—whether it is in families, schools, places of work, politics, administration, social work agencies, or anywhere else and its consequences in the form of evergrowing tensions, conflicts, miseries, and complexes of various kinds are the results of our over-emphasis on inflating the man's ego.

(*ix*) The modern craze of social scientists to run after the elusive concept of modernity has led them to lay disproportionately greater emphasis on pseudo or false modernization. We in India have been indoctrinated by many foreign as well as Indian social scientists to believe that modernity and tradition are necessarily antithetical.

Baba has demonstrated the fallacy of this stand. He has shown how many of our traditional values, practices, and knowledge can lay the solid foundations of a really happy and cohesive social loving and social progress in our society by synthesizing the desirable modern values and practices. Our traditional and modern values must supplement each other. We are not at all safe if we tend to reject one set of values totally and follow the other rashly. We have to strike a healthy balance between the two. Many of our social scientists in India are so far only paying lip service to this proposition; they are not making any conscious and concrete efforts aimed at this. The result is that we are still engulfed in the multiple dimensions of value-conflicts relating to tradition versus modernity.

(*x*) Professor A.K. Saran, a great sociologist of our country, has rightly remarked, "The new social science will be based on a dynamic concept of social relationships. Relationship between the two human beings will be based on svadharma, that is, on the dramaturgical ideas of the roles in which they find themselves."[7] This shows that the traditional social sciences do not yet have a dynamic concept of social relationship.

Baba has since long been emphasizing this very point and explaining to different role-actors the need of understanding their swadharma and of following it with a high sense of discrimination, devotion, and duty.

These differences clearly reveal that our faulty conception or perspective of the reality of a man's life in this society has been basically responsible for giving a wrong direction to our educational thinking and educational efforts. We are almost lost in confusions of the worst type, and so many kinds of mistakes, follies, waywardness, and crimes have been committed by us in our handling of the educational system as a powerful tool for the transformation of our society. It is high time that we educators correct our perspective and make a sincere effort under Baba's divine guidance to develop a really functional social philosophy on which our educational system must be based. Let us now try to see the multiple dimensions of the unfortunately great educational malaise in which we find most of our educational institutions plunged today.

The Educational Malaise in India

Bhagvan Sathya Sai Baba has Himself lightened our burden of identifying the most disturbing aspects of the educational malaise or crisis in India by making the following observations about our educational institutions and the education they impart.

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[7] A.K. Saran, "The Crisis of Modern Man," in *Value Orientation to Our System of Education*, V.K. Gokak (*ed.*), New Delhi, M. Gulab Singh & Sons, 1973, p. 288.

(*i*) There is widespread normlessness or anomie, chaos, chronic confusion, and discontent.

(*ii*) There is a lack of creative efforts; very little of creativity and originality are to be found.

(*iii*) Money power rules educational institutions. There is exploitation in educational institutions.

(*iv*) Discipline is lacking in everyone—students and teachers alike.

(*v*) It has failed to harness student power collectivity for the attainment of social harmony and well-being.

(*vi*) Students are blind imitators of unscrupulous leaders; they are exhibitionists, pleasure-seekers, and are fond of adopting an agitational approach. They disregard and disobey their teachers and parents.

(*vii*) This education makes no provision for the development of soul power. It is Godless education.

(*viiii*) Honesty is at a discount in it.

(*ix*) There are unabashed untruth and deceit in them.

(*x*) Politeness and good manners are outmoded forms of behaviour.

(*xi*) Intolerance is held in high esteem.

(*xii*) Teachers have grown materialistic, worldly, egoistic, sensuous, and irresponsible.

(*xiii*) Authoritarian tendency in education is still dominant although we say that what we aim at is democracy.

(*xiv*) There is inadequate interaction between parents and teachers.

(*xv*) Most of our curricula are not updated and hence they are not fully useful to our society.

(*xvi*) The cultural heritage of the Sanatan Dharma and other religions has been neglected in a most regrettable manner.

(*xvii*) We find the neglect of the village communities by the college-going students of the villages.

(*xviii*) The social disease of running after social mobility has infested them. There is a poor preparation for healthy social living, citizenship, and international living.

(*xix*) It is still under the harmful influence of foreign ideas, fads, and behaviour patterns.

(*xx*) It lays too much emphasis on argumentation and empiricism.

It indeed surprises us to find how minutely and comprehensively Baba has made the diagnosis of the ills of present-day Indian education.

Some other points of criticism voiced by scholars are as under:

(*i*) Lack of a proper model of elder's behaviour. "The most difficult task of the young today is to learn good behaviour without seeing any."[8]

(*ii*) "Youth leaders are only exploring ways to get into the corrupt establishment which it should be their duty to destroy."[9]

(*iii*) "We are perhaps the world's greatest verbalizers—slogan mongers; perhaps our education is largely responsible for that. . . . Quite a large part of our educational discussion is like lecturing on navigation while the ship is going down."[10]

(*iv*) "Education is tending to increase social segregation and widen class distinctions. What is worse, this segregation is tending to widen the gulf between the classes and the masses."[11]

(*v*) "In magnitude, the growth rate of education does not seem to be very impressive and phenomenal. Also the expansion of education has not led to a sociologically meaningful degree of social mobility and change in the stratification system. Higher education is still confined to the upper classes, is a scarce good, and reflects the advantages of wealth and social origin."[12]

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[8] V.V. John, *Quest*, January 1972.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] R.G.K., "Wanted—Revolution in Education," in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 11 February 1973.

(*vi*) "Higher education in India stands as an immobile colossus insensitive to the changing contexts of contemporary life, unresponsive to the challenges of today and tomorrow, and absorbed so completely in trying to preserve the structural form that it does not have the time to consider its own larger purposes.... Education, a problem-solving instrument, has become a problem-generating mechanism."[13]

(*vii*) The unintended consequences of our faulty educational planning during the last four Five Year Plans have been the following.[14]

(*i*) Casualty of the quality of education. (*ii*) Sectorial imbalances in educational development. (*iii*) Regional imbalances in educational development. (*iv*) Failure to balance unity with diversity. (*v*) Furtherance of class differences. (*vi*) Unbridled exploitation of the masses by educational entrepreneurs. (*vii*) Defeat of the cherished goal of democracy. (*viii*) Failure to remove the barriers to modernization. (*ix*) Widespread unemployment among educated people. (*x*) Uneasy status of teachers. (*xi*) Currency of slogans in the field of education.

(*viii*) Many of our higher-ups in education like Vice-Chancellors, Professors, and Heads of Institutions are corrupt, hypocrites, exploiters, mediocres, unfearful of God and uninspiring. They are like a fence which is itself eating up the crop. The students naturally cannot have any real sense of veneration towards them.

We can thus very clearly see with our own eyes that our

[12] Yogendra Singh, *Modernization of Indian Tradition*. New Delhi, Thompson Press, 1973, pp. 105-106.

[13] S.C. Dube, "The Immobile Colossus," *The Hindustan Times*, 23 November 1973.

[14] S. P. Ruhela and K. C. Vyas, *Sociological Foundations of Education in Contemporary India*, Delhi, Dhanpat Rai & Sons, 1970, p. 119.

educational institutions are indeed burning in a wild fire and that the flames of this fire are rising up higher and higher and that we have already suffered a great damage from them. We have to extinguish the fire and rebuild our educational system with a great sense of urgency.

BLUEPRINT FOR EDUCATIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

Three Alternatives to Solve the Crisis of Education

(*i*) Elimination, suspension or rejection: e.g. Evan Illich's concept of "Deschooling Society", indicative of dejection, alienation and despair.

(*ii*) Revolution in education: e.g. Naxalites attacking schools, colleges and killing Vice-Chancellors, university and school teachers. No proper solution. Hence unsuitable. The Chinese model of cultural revolution—Professors of Peking University thrown out, Russians treating their free minded intellectuals. "School without politics is hypocrisy" (Lenin).

(*iii*) Reconstructionism is needed, e.g., as we do after an earthquake, fire or ferocious storm.

Implications/Demands of the Philosophy of Reconstructionism in Education

According to Philosopher Bremald they are:

(*i*) Understanding of the real state of affairs of the society—realization of its "cultural crisis."

(*ii*) Minor or retail adjustments will not do; time demands major and wholesale reconstruction.

(*iii*) Need to evolve a utopian concept of society and the role of education in it—it must be a functional, workable or achievable utopia.

(*iv*) Voluntary consensus of the people is needed for making it possible for education to achieve the utopia. Indoctrination of the students with the principles of utopia is not advised.

(*v*) Due emphasis on the past, present and future. But present is the most important of all ages. Our eyes should be on future also.

In our view, the most important spirit of reconstructionism is that all the existing institutions or systems of working in our society need not be uprooted or thrown aside. The good, useful or functional ones among them should be retained and they should be utilised for the task of the reconstruction of the society after giving them a proper reorientation or transformation.

A Profile of Our Utopian Society in India

Close to what Gandhi thought of Sarvodaya and Sai Baba's portrayal of Ram Rajya we would like to call it *Sai Yugiya Samaj* (Sai Age Indian society).

(*i*) Establishing or reviving of Rama Rajya—a secular, moral, tolerant, unexploitative, peaceful and dharmic society.

(*ii*) Democratic society in which there are: rule of the majority based on social morality or ethics; constructive criticism by the minorities, social justice available to all groups of people; compensatory treatment to the hitherto unprivileged groups; and secularism—respect for all religions and ideologies—open society.

(*iii*) Conjunctive or cooperative social processes to be dominant there. Accent on accommodation, adjustment, cooperation, integration, unity, and assimilation.

(*iv*) Healthy resolution of value-conflicts—peace, harmony, coexistence, unity in diversity.

(*v*) Economic efficiency—full employment, balance among industrial development, urbanization and rural development, no exploitation of the have-nots.

(*vi*) Awareness of the Atmic principle and the principle of swadharma on the part of every group and every individual.

(*vii*) Awareness of the rights and duties and one's capability in the citizens.

(*viii*) Politics based on principles.

(*ix*) Renaissance of culture, religion, morality, learning, arts and crafts of ancient India.

(*x*) Learning society—webs of learning to be developed in homes, discussions, talks, libraries etc.

(*xi*) A modern society—free from the traditional superstitions, hypocrisy, lethargy, inertia as well from the fads and foibles of modernization. A healthy and functional balance between the traditional and modern values. Accent on universalistic achievement-oriented pattern variables.

(*xii*) Healthy socio-psychological processes to be promoted.

(*xiii*) Society in which instead of public cooperation readily available, there should be initiative on the part of the people to change their society.

Sai Baba's Laws of Social Life in our Utopian Society

"Without cultivating love for others, you can never cultivate love for yourself."

"One cannot get anything without sharing it with humanity around him."

"If you want to enjoy happiness, pleasure and bliss for ever, be good, do good and see good."

"Life consists in man's attempts to move out of a place called 'I' to 'we'."

"The present when you can do something is the most sacred of all times."

"Have *'nistha'* (belief) and *'sabri'* (patience), then have the belief that '*Allah Dego*' (God will grant)."

"Treat everyone as your kin. Everyone has the same Atma."

Culture of peace.

"There shines the Atma as a spark of the immortal flame. Therefore, recognise in each being, in each man, a brother, the child of God, and ignore all limiting thoughts and prejudices based on status, colour, class, nativity and caste."

"Let the world go topsy turvy, you remain where you are, standing and staying in your own place, look on calmly at the show of all things passing before you."

Profile of Education in Our Utopian Society

Aims. (*i*) To help the society to become a society of our Utopian conception. (*ii*) *To unlearn whatever undesirable, immoral and dysfunctional things have been learnt by us* as a result of our contact with the West and due to the growth of narrow, fissiparous, and intolerant and dirty tendencies in the age of modern industrialization, politics and mass culture. (*iii*) To emphasize traditional form of socialization in early stage and anticipatory socialization (socialization for the unknown future) in later stages to help the society to become a learning society (Toffler's ideas, Gandhiji's Basic Education).

The Conception of Child or Student. (*i*) The child is not a nuisance or a little devil, but he is Amritputra, 'Divya Atma Swaroop', an innocent and pious soul, heir to the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of India. (*ii*) Child's mind is not a *tabula rasa* (clean slate). It carries within it "the impressions of all his previous lives," as Baba has said. He is full of great potentialities, which are to be blossomed out in an atmosphere of love, trust, care and patience by teachers, parents and all other elders. (*iii*) Due to their inexperience and youthful energies, the young are liable to be led away by fashions, fads and excitement. Hence guidance and discipline are needed. (*iv*) The student has an idealism. He finds a great trauma in college to find the traditionally corrupt order prevailing there also.

The Conception of Teacher. (*i*) He should not think himself to be a mere giver of formal instruction. American concept of teacher as a seller of knowledge is to be neglected. He should try to conform to the ancient ideal of a guru. Brahma—Creator of good values, attitudes and skills. Vishnu—Nourisher of peace, happiness, dharma, progress and prosperity. Mahadeva—Upholder of truth, beauty and goodness; destroyer of the evil tendencies. (*ii*) He should himself continue to learn throughout his life. (*iii*) He should be God-fearing and secular. Secularism in India now unfortunately means pulling down Hinduism and falsely praising certain aggressive sects and minorities every time. There is a real need to be tolerant of others' religions and cultures. (*iv*) He should enjoy complete autonomy to work and show his worth, frame his own curricula and teach them. He should be allowed to examine his own students with full powers. (*v*) He should be a truly democratic leader—free from authoritarian and exploitative tendencies. (*vi*) He should not be treated as a mere clog in a machine, a part of big bureaucracy or a slave of society; his individuality and worth must be recognized. (*vii*) He should have a passion for social justice. Real reformist must take ethical stands on serious social, political and cultural issues—must not have the tendencies of ambivalence, alienation or apathy. He should be like Bertrand Russel—a defender of the exploited ones and upholder of the laws of ideal social living—free from traditional prejudices. (*viii*) He should be adept in the art of socializing the children in the traditional as well as anticipatory forms of socialization. (*ix*) He must have a proper reorientation or retraining in the new philosophy, psychology and sociology of child development. (*x*) Should have a thorough grounding in the knowledge of India's cultural and spiritual heritage, and that of the other religions and countries of the world. A firm believer in the Advaita philosophy. (*xi*) Should have a high sense of professionalization. Awareness of his rights and duties as teachers. If teachers are demoralized and they do not go on strike on just causes, the students begin to detest them as cowards. (*xii*) He must be aware of the "crisis of culture" throughout the world and especially the one in our country today. (*xiii*) He must aim at becoming a "Mini Sai Baba" himself.

The Strategies

(*i*) The strategy of the State to spend very huge amounts of money and get educational results will not work—already the educational schemes in the Fifth Five Year Plan have shrunk recently: "Against the Rs 3200 crores educational blue-print for the Fifth Plan published in 1972, the draft plan allocated only Rs 1725 crores. It is expected to be cut further .... The schemes likely to take the axe worst are those meant for 'transformation of the educational system' and 'improvement of standards' ...." "By the year 2000 A.D., more than 50 per cent of the children in the school-going age group would not have entered the gates of formal education. .... The "head shrinking" will affect children and youth belonging to the underprivileged social groups.... The social forces and bargaining power are just against the underprivileged."[15]

(*ii*) The strategy of mobilizing voluntary cooperation of the parents, rich people in society, religious establishments, industries, and other community resources will have to be evolved elaborately, e.g. Prophet Mohammad's statement: "It is better to teach children at night for one hour than to pray to God uttering 'Allah-Allah' throughout the night." Why can't the Sai Bhaktas donate or at least allow the use of their TVs, newspapers, books, tape recorders, furniture, building premises, as well as offer their services as teachers of children and adults? All this must come under the rurbric of their Bhakti and social service. Liberal donations for granting scholarships, aids, freeships, incentives for doing creative and scholarly work can also be undertaken by making an appeal to the conscience of God-fearing devotees, and other people.

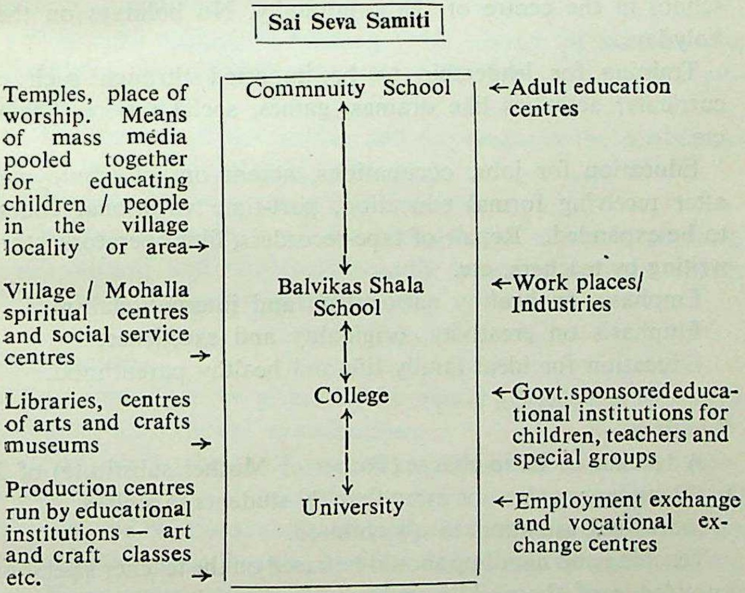
(*iii*) Stopping wasteful practices in the educational institutions —proper utilization of man and material resources already deployed in them is the greatest need of the hour.

[15] *The Hindustan Times*, 23 May 1974.

(*iv*) Developing material aids from waste products, locally available cheap materials—decorations as in Prashanthi Nilayam and Brindavan—how leaves are twisted and flowers are decorated to make door and Sad Guru's chair and path decorations. All these things should be learnt.

(*v*) Harnessing the advantages of the means of mass media like radio, T.V., film, newspapers in education. That way alone education can reach the teeming millions of this country. The old concept of a school in every village will have to be replaced by the ideas of learning webs like Employment Exchanges, and portable schools run by peripatetic teachers and tape recorders.

The Institutional Complex to be Evolved in Every City/Town


Sai Seva Samiti
Commnuity School
Balvikas Shala School
College
University
Temples, place of worship. Means of mass media pooled together for educating children / people in the village locality or area
Village / Mohalla spiritual centres and social service centres
Libraries, centres of arts and crafts museums
Production centres run by educational institutions — art and craft classes etc.
Adult education centres
Work places/ Industries
Govt. sponsored educational institutions for children, teachers and special groups
Employment exchange and vocational exchange centres

Curriculum

"If you cannot use your education to be near the Feet of Lord, what is the purpose of all this knowledge? You must have God in your heart and recognize all beings as equal." (Sai Baba)

Add spirituality—knowledge of Atmic principle, awareness of the essence of the great religions of the world, and the sociological foundations of a workable utopian society portrayed by us above.

Eliminate dishonest and false historical distortions belittling the contribution of our sacred texts, like Gita, Upanishad, Puranas, etc., and our cultural and historical heroes of all religions.

Develop useful arts and crafts—decoration, cleanliness, music, dancing, pictorial art, gardening, etc.

Eliminate dead wood in the existing curricula.

Celebration of festivals, great days, fairs of all religions by the school in the centre of the community. No holidays on these holydays.

Training for leadership to be imparted through such co-curricular activities like dramas, games, social service, bhajan, etc.

Education for jobs, occupations, accent on self-employment after receiving formal education, part-time vocational courses to be expanded. Repair of tape-recorders, film operators, story-writing by teachers, etc.

Emphasis on healthy nationalism and internationalism.

Emphasis on creativity, originality and excellence.

Education for ideal family life and healthy parenthood.

Teaching

A teacher to be in charge (Father or Mother substitute) of 20 to 30 students only; not more than 30 students in a class.

Individual attention to all children.

Teaching and handling should be based on the teacher's personal knowledge of the child's socio-economic, cultural and psychological backgrounds. Sociological background of each student of his class must be explored by the teacher.

Emphasis on the creation of a proper learning environment in homes, schools and neighbourhoods.

Emphasis on bureaucratic method. (Paulo Friere, Mexican Revolutionary); Problem-posing education instead of problem-solving education is needed.

Emphasis in teaching at reflective level—learning by insight to be promoted.

Judicious use of reinforcement in teaching.

Desirable ideals or models of behaviour must be presented by teachers and elders instead of prescriptions or instructions.

Emphasis on self-discipline.

Strategies of discussion, lecture, self-experimentation, introspection, meditation to be adopted.

Broadened attitude of learning from objects of nature—sky, mountains, rivers, birds, trees, etc. "The whole world is a university." (Baba).

"The oneness of the teacher and the taught is the destination of the process of learning." (Baba).

Emphasis on *Swadhyaya* (Self study).

Correlation method of teaching to be revived—physical, socio-cultural and craft/economically productive environments to be made the media of education.

Examination

Examination to be given by the actual subject teachers only —banish all external examinations.

A ten point scheme of assessment should be implemented—character, morality, cooperative living; respect for the traditional cultures and religions; social service; occupational skills, training in jobs/vocations; health, hygiene and yoga; respect toward parents, teachers, elders and women; practical application of formal learning in real life situations; formal knowledge imparted through curriculum; proficiency in creative arts; and overall assessment of personality as a student.

Administrative Control

Decentralization of control.

Control of education by the community—parents, educationists, teachers, students and other enlightened citizens of the area/locality.

Humanitarian or democratic control.

Shared responsibility, "Love should be the fly-wheel of an organization." (Baba).

Representative bureaucracy—minimum control of education by bureaucrats and politicians.

Epilogue

It is indeed a gigantic challenge for the Indian nation to translate this utopia into a reality. Let us all join in praying to the Bhagvan that He be pleased enough to bless and grant us His Divine guidance, grace and help in meeting this challenge squarely in fulfilling the formidable task of educational reconstruction in the world's largest democracy. Let each of us act like dauntless little lamps in darkness. "The smaller the lamp, the darker the night, the greater would be the light."

16. MORAL, RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL EDUCATION

DR V. K. GOKAK

Like Socrates, one has still to ask the question: Can virtue be taught? The aim of moral education is gradually to transfer control from an external agent to the child, i.e. to develop "the moral autonomy of self-control" in the child. This would be evident in a child who sees more than one alternative in a problem and who selects one out of those to act upon.

But how is moral education to be implemented ? As J.S. Brubracher notes, ethical instruction stresses knowledge while moral knowledge aims at performance. Ethical instructions should be reserved for later years. Intellectual and moral studies should go together. Moral teaching does not mean teaching "efficiency"—virtues like industry, patience, courage, perseverence, or fidelity. Even a bad man may have these qualities. What matters is the end in view—what has been called the "Central ethical purpose". A child should develop good inner character as well as force of character resulting in good actions. Some educators think that morals should be taught indirectly. But the theologian is not satisfied unless the child is told that moral behaviour is an obligation that he owes to God. Religious sanction is more important than "social pressure" or "individual habituation". He thinks that moral education has also to be theological. In any case, he should have the opportunity in school and college to practise the moral ideals which he is taught, in the social context of shops, laboratories, and play-grounds and outside in field trips and community activities.

As for spiritual activities, there are four ways of bringing them home to the student. One is that of a secular approach to spiritual values. If a school or college promotes in a student respect for scientific methods, academic freedom, civil liberty, dignity of labour, and faith in man's ability to shape his destiny, it is surely doing its best to diffuse democratic spiritual values. In these circumstances, as Brubracher remarks, education itself becomes a religion.

But there are teachers who desire to have something more than secularism. They are glad to have got rid of superstitions. But they find that science has rendered the world even more mysterious than it was before. They believe in humanistic religious education, i.e. they accept God *as* experienced by man in science and social relationships rather than through mystical visions and the scriptures. Loving one's neighbour is the same thing for them as loving God. The Church for them is a modern democratic community and God a loving father. This dependence on experience falls in line with the "progressive" view of education. One is constantly reconstructing one's ideas about God, and teaching or learning religion becomes a creative experience. Thus, in a sense, spiritual education comes to mean "simply education in the most complete sense of the term."

But there is an object raised against humanistic religious education—does it not amount to anthropomorphism or recreating God in man's image?

There is a third approach to spiritual education which may be called mystical or mystical-humanist. This approach does not rule out "visions" or a reading of the scriptures. But it insists on interpreting the scriptures as mystical or intuitive experience open to any individual. Scriptures should not be accepted as dogma or as external authority. There is a way of sadhana, meditation or behaviour conforming to certain ethical or psychological disciplines, which opens up transcendental experience and lifts us to the divine presence. Inward and outward purity gradually leads man to God-realization.

This approach is allied to philosophies which may be somewhat divergent among themselves. For example, it is linked to philosophies as wide apart as the spiritual anarchism of J. Krishnamurthy, the integral yoga of Sri Aurobindo, the all-inclusive *Advaita* of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, the Bhakti Marg of T.L. Vaswani associated with his good educational institutions in Poona, and the Sai Path of Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba. One has to examine the working of this approach in the concerned educational institutions at Varanasi, Pondicherry, Calcutta, Bangalore, Poona and Anantapur, and other places in order to judge the measure of success of which this approach is capable.

There is one other fact which characterizes the mystical approach and that is its ability to unify all religions, cutting across all differences. This is based on the interpretation that the spiritual experience which resides at the heart of all religions is one and the same. Reality itself is many-sided and it is only natural that one creed or religion should differ from another in its symbolism, ritualism and intellectual formulation. As for J. Krishnamurthy, he frees himself from all consideration of religions by just ignoring them. Apart from his teachings, it may be said generally that the mystical-humanist approach expounds its stand in detail with reference to one particular religion. For all the seers mentioned above, it is Hinduism. For the Sufi mystic, it is Islam. For the Christian mystic, it is Christianity.

The theologian is not satisfied with this approach. What he wants is religious education which involves "a theology of education" over and above a philosophy of education. As Brubracher remarks, the "theologian-educator starts, not with autonomous man, but with divine thought about man." The educators' thought about man must come from beyond man, from God Himself—His truth as it is revealed in the scriptures. Sacred truth is different from secular truth and the "two are to be taught concurrently in the same curriculum."

For the theologian, the transgressions of man are deviations which have to be punished before Jesus, the Saviour saves him, not just natural events in the process of development, which man will outgrow under the guidance of Jesus, the teacher and reformer. The theologian needs an infallible guide to decide what God's law is. And he finds one either in the Church as the Roman Catholic does, or in the Bible, like Protestants. The mystical humanist, on the other hand, prizes his own experiences, intuition or conscience above everything else and he consults the experience of others, as revealed in their lives or writings, be they Christ, the Buddha, Shri Krishna, Zoroaster or any other seer.

How profoundly different from other types religious education can be is shown by the fact that some Christian creeds start with a pessimistic view of human nature. The Roman Catholics and the Calvinists start with the idea of original sin and the fall of man. Rousseau and his followers were optimistic for they thought that human nature, as it came from the hands of God, was essentially good. The modern social scientist thinks that human nature has its strengths and weaknesses; and whether they are strengths or weaknesses will be determined by the environmental context. The Hindu view of human nature assumes that human life is the greatest of boons given by God to man for self-realization. Every river winds safe to sea, and every individual, even the most sinful, will find his way to God in one life or other, depending upon his accumulated *karma* and his aspiration and effort in the present life. One can easily see how educational practice will differ profoundly, depending upon the assumptions upon which it is based.

Again, when a child is developing along a wayward path, the theologian-educator will hold that the child should attend Sunday school, go through a number of turning points or experiences of the value of religion, and thus arrive at regeneration. Or he may have to go through another distinctive learning experience—

that of public religious worship or contemplation in a sacred environment. This will be direct, intuitive learning, like learning art or music in the secular curriculvm. It is also quite possible that a decisive change may come by way of an inner illumination which has nothing to do with the ordinary channels of learning. But one should not forget, in this context, that an illumination of this kind is also preceded by many contemplative moments that have prepared the individual for it.

The secular educator realizes the fact that a decisive change of this kind usually occurs under "contingent and precarious circumstances". Not every child is blessed with a wise parent, a sympathetic teacher, or an inspiring book which falls into his hands at the right moment. But the theologian thinks that this is not due to chance. Man can prepare himself for grace by participating in the sacraments.

It would seem as though secular education leans too much towards rejection and religious education too much towards acceptance. The mystical-humanist approach seems to strike the right balance, fostering reason as well as faith, freedom as well as the right use of tradition.

We may now enquire what kind of education is administered by a mystical-humanist or a church-related school or college. Every educational philosophy accepts what are called the seven cardinal principles of education—"command of the fundamental principles of communication and computation; the three R's; health; competency in family, civic and vocational relations; worthy use of leisure and ethical sensitivity." Knowledge and vital piety are particularly expected to go together.

The church-related colleges in America direct students in the "elaboration and practice of supernatural ideals."[1] This is done by resorting to explicit exposition of theological principles for a

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[1] Myson E. Wicke, *The Church-Related College*, Washington D.C., Centre for Applied Research in Education, Inc., 1974, p. 34.

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few hours a week and applying theological thinking to each subject and providing facilities for daily attendance at Mass, for frequent reception of the sacraments and for developing a truly Christ-like habit of living.

A few more features can be seen in some other colleges—out of class study of the scriptures and the Christian heritage; deepened theological understanding of history and of the present; appreciation of the arts and growing interest in the expression of Christian insight through the arts; sharp sensitivity to major social, political, and international problems, especially in their entailment of responsibility for Christians; a resurgent willingness to become involved and to take risks where they believe responsibility calls; a developing resistance to the materialistic orientation of life and a growing interest in the recovery of spiritual foundations; and concern that the church recover its prophetic voice, break off its enfeebling identification with the existing order, and free itself from entrenched bureaucracy within.

In their statements of purpose, many church-related colleges are shrill in their criticism and defensive in dealing with their own virtues. Some colleges require faculty members to subscribe to a statement of faith consisting of theological statements like "We believe that man was created in the image of God; that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also that spiritual death which is separation from God; and that all human beings are born with a sinful nature...."[2] One college claims that it produces graduates who are well-informed, discriminating, articulate, historically-rooted and genuinely human—"whole" men. Another claims that it produces gifted "generalists" who are also the true christian products of christian education. There is a suspicion that, in these institutions, intellectual rigour and excitement are "subordinated to religious indoctrination often because of sheer incapacity." But it is satisfying to think that some of them try earnestly to develop a community spirit in which "intellectual endeavour and high moral purpose are dominant drives." The more liberal of them recognize their obligations to students of other denominations and faiths and seek to provide them with opportunities to cultivate their religious life in their own manner.

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[2] Wicke, *op cit.*, p. 34.

Regimentation continues to characterise some colleges. Dormitory hours for girls, rules for class attendance, prohibition of social dancing and the use of alcohol show that some institutions are attempting to maintain the conservative point of view regarding morals and social customs.

A certain number of imperatives can be laid down with regard to colleges which wish to cultivate intellectual vigour as well as "spirit." There should be no compromise with the demand for intellectual goals. Strong faculties should be recruited. Outstanding teachers attract exciting students. A small college has many advantages. It can develop a sense of community, change more readily, be more susceptible to vigorous leadership, make fruitful dialogue possible among all sectors of the academic community and develop a campus tone which exhibits moral concern along with intellectual excellence.[3]

But a small college has also its disadvantages. It may become so regimented that personal growth is hampered. There may be no room for rebellious youngsters who disappear more readily in the broad stream of a larger community. There may be several one-man departments and this will lead to faculty over-loads and lack of proper give-and-take between student and teacher. The college should be brought to a more effective size in order to withstand the dangers of provincialism.

Colleges of similar philosophy must find new ways of co-operation in higher education, give up vocational programmes, develop cycles of independent studies in some areas, close on-campus sessions for some weeks for working in some community agency at home or abroad, do cultural research or study or carry on some special activity. They can develop inter-departmentally, involving team-teaching like the course entitled "Christianity and Culture," integrating history, philosophy and religion.

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[3] Wicke, *op cit.*, p. 100.

17. THE SAI PROGRAMME OF HIGHER EDUCATION

MISS ANIMA MUKERJEE and DR J. HEMALATHA

IDEALS OF SAI EDUCATION

In His discourses to students, teachers and the public, Bhagvan Shri Sathya Sai Baba has for several decades been very pressingly advocating reconstruction of education in India. His educational ideas are based on the broad philosophy of life which is composed of four resilient and immortal values of our ancient Indian culture —truth, duty, peace, and love.

According to Baba, "Education is a slow process like the unfoldment of a bud, the fragrance becoming deeper and more perceptible with the silent blossoming, petal by petal, of the entire flower." The basic purpose of education repeatedly emphasized by Him is to develop character, spirituality, value of renunciation, service, love, humility, and self-confidence. "Education," says Baba, "is not the acquisition of burdensome information regarding objects and men. It is the awareness of the immortal spirit within which is the spring of joy, peace, and courage."

In His Message to the students of Shri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Women, Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, in their college magazine *Bharathi* (1973-74), Baba as founder president of the College, has very categorically said:

> Dear students! The pure heart is the best mirror for the reflection of truth. So all these disciplines are for the purification of the heart and as soon as it is pure, all truths flash upon it in

a minute. All truth in the universe will manifest in your heart if you are sufficiently pure."

His Message to the *Bharathi* (1970-71) emphasized the following three points. Firstly, "Teaching is a process in which teachers and the taught cooperate and it must be a pleasant experience for both, a useful and heartening endeavour." Secondly, "When you are watching your watch and trying to find out the time, remember that the word watch has got five letters and each letter is giving you a great lesson. W—watch your *words;* A—watch your *actions;* T—watch your *thoughts;* C—watch your *character;* and H—watch your *heart.*" Thirdly "strive to make India strong and happy. She was once the Guru of Humanity. Let Her assume that role again. . . .The Vedic seers prayed for the peace and happiness of all mankind, of all animate and inanimate things. Cultivate that universal vision, and . . . march on."

The imperatives of proper education according to Baba, are knowledge, skill, balance and insight. Baba even goes further to demand that "One has to develop knowledge into skill."

Students have to be given information, but they must be taught to intermingle it with their living experience. They should be so trained that they are constantly in quest of knowledge so that gradually from a regular and disciplined search for facts they tread the path of wisdom.

Students should develop a love for excellence and learn to understand and admire all that is good in any culture. At the same time, they should not be over-influenced by foreign cultures that they cease to appreciate the glories of our own culture. This will enable them to develop their character, integrity, self-confidence, and above all, love for devoted and earnest service which will add beauty to their personality.

The fusion of skill and vision will also enable them to harmonise action with contemplation, science with humanism, enhancing their power of imagination and adding to their poise. This will infuse in them a sense of discipline, self-control, resulting in achievement, leading ultimately to self-realization.

Education patterned on these lines will give the youth a truly secular outlook. Sai Baba's emblem contains the OM of the Hindus, the Cross of the Christians, the Moon and Star of the Muslims, the Fire of the Zoroastrians, and the Wheel of the Buddhists. The ideal of the Sai programme of education is that students must learn to understand, appreciate and uphold these symbols of the great religions of the world, and learn to behave in a truly humane manner, ignoring narrow sectarian viewpoints.

They must learn to live in an atmosphere vibrating with genuine love, appreciation, cooperation, humility, devotion, dedication, peace, and deep faith and optimism in human goodness and greatness which will add new zest, new growth and new meaning to their lives. A love for vigyan (science) and pragyan (spirituality) will endow these young citizens with a greater sense of collective consciousness and heightened love for humanity. They have to rise above corruption, envy, greed, frustration, and lethargy—the "moral disease" and symptoms of "soul destroying cynicism" confronting the society today.

The essence of all these Sai ideals of education has been presented by Baba Himself in this clearcut advice to students:

> You must learn to become a new type of leader, leaders who have passed through the crucible of *Seva* (service) and *Sadhna* (devotion); leaders who have passed through school and college and mastered the problems of the present and the future, in the light of the past; leaders who appreciate the traditions and culture of this country.

This then is the background or socio-philosophical context in which the Sai programme of running colleges in India is being implemented.

SAI COLLEGES—MAIN FEATURES

In order to translate Sai Baba's ideals about the functional value orientation of the Indian system of education into practice, the Shri Sathya Sai Educational Trust, under the dynamic and charismatic personality of Sai Baba has started a number of colleges in India. The first one is Shri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College for Women, Anantapur, started on 22 July 1968. The second one is the Shri Sathya Sai Arts and Science College, Brindavan, Kadugodi, Whitefield (Bangalore), started in June 1969. This college is for boys only. The third college is Shri Sathya Sai College for Women, Jaipur, started in 1974. The fourth one is Shri Sathya Sai College for Women, Bhopal, started in July 1975. The first is affiliated to Shri Venkateswara University, and is a post-graduate college having M.A. classes in Telugu only. The second is affiliated to Bangalore University; it is an undergraduate college with three year degree courses in arts, science and commerce. The Jaipur College with T.D.C. courses in arts and commerce, is affiliated to the Rajasthan University. The Bhopal College is also an undergraduate college, affiliated to the Bhopal University.

A close perusal of the prospectuses, calendars, handbooks, and the annual magazines of these colleges and actual on-the-spot observation will reveal to anyone who is keenly interested in understanding and analyzing their whole organizational and academic set-up, a number of their general features.

All these colleges are secular and offer modern courses prescribed by Indian universities. Religious and spiritual education is provided not by direct instruction, but by example, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and by creating a community atmosphere in the college premises. There are modern and useful activities in these colleges which help in the proper development of students' personalities. The atmosphere in these colleges is not narrow or sectarian.

Since Baba, who, as we all know, is an omnipresent and omnipotent Incarnation of God, is the President of the Shri Sathya Sai Educational Trust, and also President of the governing bodies of these colleges, they are organized with utmost efficiency, dedication, honesty, and love. Baba's watchful eyes are always over all. His personal notes and long letters to the Principals mentioning the shortcomings observed by Him are often accompanied with stern advice to improve in each and every area. His surprise visits to colleges and the boys' hostel rooms at any time force everyone (particularly in the first two colleges) to be alert, conscientious, dedicated to one's *swadharma*. All sorts of journals, magazines, and books are kept in these colleges. Admissions are not restricted to the wards of Sai devotees only. Baba draws many good souls to these colleges in a miraculous manner.

These colleges follow the system of putting ten to twelve students under the guardianship of a teacher adviser. Distinguished scholars deliver talks on different themes. Festivals of all communities, all national days, and the birthday of Sai Baba are celebrated.

THE SAI COLLEGE AT ANANTAPUR

On 22 July 1968, T.V. Raghavulu, Education Minister, Andhra Pradesh, declared the B.A. and P.U.C. Classes of this college open with the blessings of Bhagvan Shri Sathya Sai Baba, in its temporary campus on the Government Girls School grounds at Anantapur, the District Headquarter, which is only a few miles from Sai Baba's main Ashram and village, Puttaparthi. Some temporary sheds were raised in 1969 to meet the demands of the expanding student population with the starting of B.Sc and Intermediate classes in arts and science.

Since then, there has been rapid development and expansion. In November 1969, Gopal Swaroop Pathak, then Vice-President of India, laid the foundation stone for the multi-storeyed college building, and Khandu Bhai Desai,Governor of Andhra Pradesh placed the foundation stone for the women's hostel.

Away from the hustle and bustle of the town, amidst the scenic beauty provided by the lake and hillocks, today the new multi-storeyed building—an exquisite example of architectual skill, welcomes the growing generation of youth with a message of closeness to the Supreme Being, and an enchanting enterprize in a sphere of life, full, abundant and ever-expanding.

Baba blessed this college on the day of its opening saying:

> Women in India have always been honoured. All the same women in India have a long way to go before they acquire a proper status and pattern their life around a purposeful scheme of values, based on all that is golden in our traditional ideology blended with some modernistic mores and norms. .... As a good citizen, today she must actively and intelligently participate in the process of planning and development that is constantly going around in the bigger family that is her nation and sometimes must clearly comprehend and confront the problems that challenge humanity as a whole.
>
> Women today, more than ever, require a wholesome personality with sharp intellect, enhanced knowledge, and an analytical power. Above all, she should be a store of moral integrity and ever-increasing reservoir of spirituality. She should also develop a deep faith in the Great Unseen, to meet the challenging and changing world around her.... The essential raison-d'etre of our institution lies in character development based on ancient Indian ideologies which will enable young women of India to confront the crisis of the era with ease and grace.

The most significant features and achievements of this college are present in a condensed form below.

Subjects Offered

(*i*) *Two Year Intermediate:* English, General Telugu, Advanced

Telugu, Economics, History, Hindi, Sanskrit, Civics, Mathematics (General), Mathematics (Optional), Logic, Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences.

(*ii*) *B.A. Part I:* General English, General Telegu, Hindi. *Part III:* Economics, Politics, History, Advanced Telegu.

(*iii*) *B.Sc.:* Physics, Chemistry, Botany and Zoology.

(*iv*) *M.A.:* Telegu.

Results of the 1975 Examinations

Senior Intermediate Arts: Part I: English 76%, Telugu 98.6%, Sanskrit 100%, Hindi 100%, Civics 97%, History 100%, Economics 98%, Commerce 93%, Logic 100%, Modern Languages: Telegu 100%, English 100%.

Senior Intermediate Science: Part I: English 80.5%; Sanskrit 100%, Hindi 100%, Telegu 97.5%, Mathematics 87.5%, Physical Sciences 92%, Biological Sciences 97%.

The results of the degree examinations have not yet been published by the University.

Results of the 1974 Examinations

B.A. (III) 95%; B.Sc. (III) 77%; B.A. (II) 64%; B.Sc. (II) 93%; Inter. Arts 63%; Inter Science 83%; M.A. (Final) 89%.

Subjectwise Pass Percentage

Subjects	*M.A.*	*Inter Science*	*Inter Arts*	*B.A./B.Sc.*
General Telegu	88.8	98.4	97	96
Additional Telegu			100	100
General English		86.6	75	91
Hindi		100	100	100
History			98	100
Economics			98	96
Politics/Civics			76.4	100

Philosophy/Logic			91
Commerce		75	
Physical Sciences	93.3	Physics	100
		Chemistry	76.6
Biological Sciences	100	Botany	100
		Zoology	100
Mathematics			86

Number of Students: About 700.

Associations. Literary Association, Humanities Association, Science Association, Fine Arts Association, Atheletic Association.

Culture classes. They are a special feature of this college. Bhagvat Gita is explained to the students.

Drama. "*Sambhavami Yuge Yuge*" enacted during 1974-75, conveyed the message that God, the great protector, is ever ready to help the righteous in every age.

Co-curricular activities. Games and Sports; First Aid and Hygiene; Planning Forum; National Service Scheme; Girl Guides; Magazine; Hobbies; Excursions; Exhibitions.

Hostel. Accommodation for 200 girls.

Some Instructions to Students

(*i*) Students must learn college prayers by heart and must be punctual in attending prayers.

(*ii*) They must participate actively in the bhajan and meditation arranged along with the culture class every Thursday evening.

(*iii*) They must approach their advisers once a week to discuss their problems.

(*iv*) They must wear uniforms on Thursday.

(*v*) Representation of complaints and grievances may be made to the principal, through the advisers, or discussed in the College Counselling Body meeting. En-masse representation by students is taboo.

Stipends, Scholarships, Fee Concessions

Students belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Denotified Tribes, Vadde and Christians converted from Scheduled Castes and Tribes are exempted from the payment of tuition fees. Students belonging to the economically backward classes, i.e. those students the income of whose parents is below Rs 3,600 per year, are granted half-fee concession. A number of scholarships and stipends are given by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, and Government of Andhra Pradesh.

Loans

Loans are given to students belonging to lower income groups, who have an aggregate of not less than 50 per cent in the qualifying examination. The amount is Rs 720 for the Intermediate Course and the T.D.C. These loans are repayable in easy instalments after the recipient secures a job.

This brief profile would not be complete without the coverage of the students' estimation of this college, for the students are always the best judge of their teachers and educational institution. Below are some comments by students printed in their college magazine *Bharathi* (1973-74) under the title "We—the Blessed Ones":

> When Bhagavan came to Kampala in Africa in July 1968, we had His darshan. We were conquered by His love and graciousness. When I came to Brindavanam with my parents, for the Shivaratri festival, Baba asked me to join this college. I was so fascinated and inspired by His kind words that I decided to continue my studies in Bhagavan's college. One of the marked features of our college is that we learn to accept and respect all religions....
>
> Nila Patel (Junior Inter Science)

> I have come from the hilly regions of Himachal Pradesh.

It is no doubt a unique opportunity for me to study in this beautiful college. For girls of my nature we have co-curricular activities like hobbies, sports, and photography. The Young Talents Association puts up variety shows on Saturdays. The delight we give to others and the sense of achievement and self-satisfaction overwhelm us with joy. We feel zeal for life, a dynamism taught to us in our college. The enthusiasm and deep feelings with which the bhajans are sung transport us to a state of Divine bliss. Encouragement is given to participate in debates, elocution, and music competition. . . .Above all, we are given the golden opportunity of visiting Prashanthi Nilayam during festivals.

Ruma Bhagra (B.A. II)

My parents preferred to send me to this college because of its high ideals and discipline. Girls from different parts of the country and abroad come to study here. In the hostel we live together like the members of a big family, the 'Sai Family'. Swami showers His love on all of us equally. Though we are away from our parents, we do not feel dejected and unhappy, for He takes the place of both mother and father, and looks after us with infinite compassion and affection. Living together in harmony, we learn to tolerate and respect others. Here a visitor can see unity in diversity. We can't express the joy we feel when we have Swami's Divine darshan and padasparshan when we go to Prasanthi Nilayam, which we often do.

We feel overjoyed when Swami calls us to His interview room and speaks to us with such love and compassion. We come out charged with the feeling and desire to improve ourselves.

A.N. Vishaka (B.Sc. II)

I am from Rajasthan. I can say without hesitation that the discipline found here cannot be seen in other educational institutions. Fully conscious of the emptiness and indiscipline among the students of today, Swami, whenever He gives his Divine Discourse to us, reiterates the necessity of our living a balanced and disciplined life....

K. Tulja Rani (Junior Inter Science)

I come from the colourful land, Coorg. For the past seven years we have been devotees of Sai Baba. My happiness knew no bounds when, in an interview with Bhagavan, He asked me to come and study in His college. I found this college unique in academic and other fields. One of the outstanding features of this college is the emphasis laid on development of character through the ideal of service.

Teaching is not confined to book knowledge, but includes training in social service. Stress is laid on cleanliness of the campus. I can find no words to express my good fortune to attend college. My friends tell me that I have changed a lot, become less selfish and more diligent. I am growing more aware of my responsibilities and I hope to fulfill them to the best of my ability.

C.M. Revathi (Junior Inter Arts)

That frail body in an orange robe with a bewitching smile drew me here from Ceylon. When I first joined the college, I felt very homesick. But Swami often comes here, stays in the college, speaks to us, and we also speak to Him freely. He teaches us many things with His love. The happiness I feel in His Divine presence is indescribable. I feel each one has to experience it. His intense love showered on us makes us forget our troubles. Now I am very happy in the college. We await His arrival as eagerly as we wait for our parents. The close contact between the teacher and the taught has dispelled my home-sickness, and I consider this my home.

K. Rajeevi

These voluntary and spontaneous testimonies prove that the Sai College at Anantapur is moving in the right direction in achieving the ideals of Sai education. Perhaps that was why Khandu Bhai Desai, Governor of Andhra Pradesh, said on one of the annual days of this college:

> I appeal to the academicians who study and plan the future of the country to come to this Sathya Sai College and take back with them lessons which will help them a great deal. This is a unique example of something concrete being achieved in the field of education, to rehabilitate and reform it on the right lines.

THE FUTURE

Efforts are being made by the Principal and staff of the Sai College for Women at Jaipur to develop it on the lines of Anantapur College. Due to distance of the rented building from the city and certain organizational problems, the college is at present handicapped; the admissions have not come up yet to the expectations. However, the results have been highly satisfactory—85%—91% on the average. The girls are taking keen interest in co-curricular activities and have participated in various contests with grand successes. Recently, the Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Shri Hari Deo Joshi, has sanctioned a big plot of the area of 12.17 acres for campus of this college. When the building comes up on this better located plot, the student population will multiply and the college will be able to take rapid strides of progress.

The Anantapur college is an ideal gurukul for women. It is heartening to learn that Shri Venkateswara University has recommended to the University Grants Commission that this college should be made autonomous. If this is done, we are sure that it will be a great opportunity for us. This will enable us to prepare a syllabus in consonance with our ideals, and we will be able to evolve more mature plans and find functional solutions to educational problems of our country and our age.

Baba once indicated His wish to develop this college into a national university for women's education. We fervently hope that His will shall in the very near future prevail at the appropriate time. Baba has indicated to us that He would like to visit each of His colleges and stay there for at least ten days every year from next year. That would enliven each of His colleges in the four states. Baba's earlier announcement was that He wished to start a Sai college in each state of India. Presently, the emphasis is on the consolidation and strengthening of the existing colleges.

In this paper, we have not dealt with the activities of the Shri Sathya Sai College, Brindavan, Kadugodi the Summer Course on Indian culture and spirituality, and the Shri Sathya Sai Institute of Research, Bombay, because of a lack of up to date information about them and also owing to limitations of space.

We are very fortunate and grateful to Bhagavan Baba for providing us the rare opportunity to serve in His educational institutions in our present lives. We are instruments in His Divine Hands, and we feel happy that He has chosen us and our colleagues and students to be harbingers of the Sai era of cultural and spiritual renaissance in the history of human civilization.

18. THE BEST DECISION

DR F. G. GOULD

The behavioural scientist is concerned with the study of behaviour and therefore with the analysis of the determinants of behaviour in given situations. He presumes that behaviour, even what appears to be erratic, is determined by explainable factors though indeed these factors may elude cursory analysis and some behaviour may require extensive study before it may be properly said to be understood.

Even in the most pure of sciences the experts may disagree, but in the pure or so-called "hard" sciences such disagreement would tend to centre either on the interpretation of some phenomenon or some few phenomena which appear to be unexplainable by existing theory or, alternatively, there may be disagreement on certain philosophic "meta-questions" which reach outside the immediate neighbourhood of the discipline into more universal domains such as the foundations of science, the ethics of science, its responsibility to mankind, and its relation to reality.

By contrast, in the softer sciences, at least in the extreme, the experts will frequently disagree not only on a few phenomena, but on almost anything short of a tautology. Discourse appears to be fired by interpretations of words and semantic problems and at times it appears pretentious and ludicrous to use the term "science." Behavioural science is of course one of the softest of the soft sciences. It is a field where generalities are easy to come by and where it is difficult to say much of anything specific that is meaningful about anything that is important.

Baba is certainly something important. What does it mean to ask about Baba's challenge to the behavioural scientist? It would seem to presume that there is some relation between the Baba experience and the kinds of things the behavioural scientist studies. He does not study ethics or religion, or spirituality, at least not per se. He studies behaviour and its determinants; and I believe there is evidence that Baba influences, even changes, behaviour. I believe that this occurs because Baba somehow transfers the individual from one context to another. To illustrate what I mean, I want to look for a moment at a discipline in which I teach, one called management science.

The management scientist is interested in what he calls rational decision-making in situations involving humans and their labours. In a very general sense he might be called a behavioural scientist, but methodologically he is more connected with mathematics, economics, and computers. His objective is to use science and mathematics to discover "good" or "best" decisions in given situations. Here the term "good" and "best" are defined and delimited by the confines of a particular problem being analyzed. A good decision in one context may not be very good in another context as, for example, when previously unheeded considerations suddenly surface as factors to be reckoned with.

As a simple illustration, suppose that a plant manager is comparing a variety of industrial processes for producing a new line of fertilizer products. This plant manager has created a list of requirements, and suppose that among all the processes which meet all the requirements the plant manager is able to identify a process with least cost. Suppose that this distinguished least cost process happens to dump industrial waste into a nearby stream, which is conceiveable since none of his requirements stipulated that the process be clean. As long as there are no fines imposed for the dumping of waste, his best decision might be defined to be this least cost one. However, in a more broad context, considering long term effects, social factors, etc., the spilling of waste may offset the attractiveness of the low cost. In other words, perhaps his list of requirements should be broadened, and perhaps such a broadening will change his "best" decision from what it would otherwise have been.

This notion, that what is rational in one context may not be rational under different conditions, is rather obvious and familiar, and it seems to me that this simple notion may be useful in describing at least one facet of Baba's challenge, for it is not possible to know Baba without experiencing a change of context, a broadening of scope. Many devotees of Baba have perceived his influence through changes in their own lives. New things become important. Other things, once considered important, may be cast aside. New values become prominent. In more technical language, the individual's utility structure changes. His criteria for making decisions are different. Because of these changes, many of his decisions in life may differ from those he might have made before the Baba experience, even in identical situations. Of course, in an important sense this has nothing to do with behavioural science or any other discipline for it represents Baba's effect on the individual without regard to the label of his discipline, his degree, or his title.

I think it would be of great interest, however, if the behavioural scientist knew enough to be able to explain how Baba brings about these apparent changes in individuals. We might speculate that those who go to Baba are searchers or seekers of one sort or another. They may in some sense be ready for change. The ground work may be laid. They visit Baba. He perceives the individuals's needs with unbelievable insight. He perceives defenses, breaks them down in some swift way, and perhaps it is this quality and ability which may be considered "Baba's challenge to behavioural science." This is all speculation, of course, but everyone who has been with Baba will testify to the genius with which he "handles" people differently, each according to his needs, and to the effects he achieves.

Now whenever this sort of description is encountered it behoves a rational person to seek evidence and verification and to question what is reality and truth and what is not, but that is the rub and the challenge to everyone, for the entire Baba experience is a confrontation of reality and illusion. For when all is said and done, in the words of Freud, "Before art, psychoanalysis lays down its arms," and what is Baba if not art?

19. TOWARDS A UNIVERSAL RELIGION

J. S. RAO

Almost every living religion today claims that it is a world religion. In so far as the term "world religion" connotes the wide geographical extent of its spread, it is perhaps a justifiable claim. Most religions which had their genesis at particular places and at particular historical periods and under certain political and social circumstances, have not only survived the ordeals of history, but have grown to maturity and developed under tradition entirely different from those of the place of their origin.

Christianity, which was basically a religion of the west, has now permeated all over the globe. Islam which had its origin in the Middle East has spread through India, Pakistan, Bangla Desh, Indonesia and the Phillipines. Buddhism, a religion of Indian origin, has grown out of its geographical confines and spread to China, Japan, Ceylon and other countries. Hinduism, which had its birth in the ancient Indian ethos, has survived the internal dissensions and external onslaughts and is now gaining ground in the West in the form of some cult or the other. In the limited sense of global spread, all these religions can, with equal justification, claim that it is a universal religion.

What is universal religion? To define it is to confine it to a set of theological doctrines. In fact it defies all definitions and outgrows the narrow confines of the doctrines of any single living religion. Since universal religion resists definition, it is not only easier to describe its import, but is consistent with its true nature.

The universal religion, to be worthy of its name, must be universal in intent and outlook. While each of the other faiths develops its own exclusive doctrine and is eager to impose it on others, the universal religion is happily free from any doctrinaire rigidity and is good to all, intended for all and is available to all. It is a quintessence of the spirit of all living religions, without, however, their fanaticism and frantic eagerness to convert others. It embodies in itself the virtues and excellences of religions without their bigotry and their dreadful hostility for one another. Its one supreme message is the message of love based on faith in the "Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man." Is this not the core of all religions?

Three most prominent avenues to realization of the ideal of establishing the universal religion are (*i*) to get the whole of mankind to rally round one spiritual genius and owe its absolute allegiance to him; (*ii*) to pursue unifying movements based on the syncretistic elements available in all religions; and (*iii*) to pursue a comparative study of all living religions and discover the fundamental and unifying core of all faiths hidden deep under the superficial patterns of diversity in rituals, traditions, and doctrines.

In Bhagavan Shri Satya Sai Baba's Divine Person and in His eternal message of love, all these avenues merge into one broad highway which leads mankind to the universal religion which assures the troubled generation of mankind a millennium of peace and prosperity, or truth, love and righteousness.

In the Person of Shri Sathya Sai Baba, we find not only a spiritual genius who can rally round Him men of different faiths, but the manifestation of the Divine. In Him are found the Gods of all religions. He repeatedly tells His followers that they need not give up their faith in their traditional Gods—Christ, Allah, Rama or Shiva, because He is the manifestation of them all.

It is, therefore, no miracle that his Christian devotees who throng Prashanthi Nilayam from the remote corners of the West see Him as Christ reborn in India. The Muslim devotees see Him as God. From the devotees we gather that He grants them a vision of Ram, Krishna, Subramanyam, or Srinivas depending upon the Gods whom they believe in. He is the universal God, of all ages and creeds, and has come down to us to dispel the darkness of our hearts filled with ego, pride, selfishness, and fanaticism.

Bhagavan Sai's express mission is to subordinate the superficial layers of differences and to unify all creeds into one supreme religion, the religion of love and brotherhood. Through Him the Universal Religion is silently coming into being. All roads lead to Him; all faiths find their ultimate goal in Him; all streams flow to Him; all wills lose their identity and become one with melody in singing His glory.

Faith in Sai is one of the roads to universal religion. But Bhagavan does show the other paths too. In His preachings, He emphasizes the essential unity of all religions of the world. It is a part of Bhagavan's mission to bring us to a blissful awareness of the oneness of God behind the multiplicities of multiplying creeds. Underneath the ripple of waves is one undisturbed current.

In fact, every religion has its inherent and in-built factors conducive to a sense of unity. For example, Hindu philosophic doctrines tell us that all Gods are varieties of expression of the same God. Advaita Vedanta and Vishistadvaita Vedanta agree that Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva are the three facets of the one ultimate unity, Brahman. Again, the doctrine of Avatar or reincarnation, so vital to Hindu philosophy, is an attempt, unique in excellence, at unifying all creeds and sects. When Lord Krishna said: "When righteousness declines, O Bharata, when wickedness is strong, I rise, from age to age, and take visible shape and move as man with men, succouring the good, thrusting the evil back, and setting virtue on her seat again," He not only revealed His mission but also implied the oneness of all avatars that went before Him and that were to succeed Him (including Shri Satya Sai and his future avatars). Other religions of the world have also enshrined in their doctrines and practices the sense of oneness of the many. The multifarious springs of religious thought in China have united to make one cultural stream fed by the famous "Three Truths" including Taoism, Confucianism, and alien Buddhism. Japanese Shintoism absorbed into itself not only Confucian and Taoistic doctrines, but also Buddhistic ideas.

In the West, Christianity unmistakably displayed such synthesizing trends by accepting Jesus, the Jew, as Saviour and by incorporating Hebrew ideas and scriptures in the Bible. Denominational divergences in modern Christianity are being bridged by several ecumenical movements emphasizing the oneness of all religions and brotherhood of mankind.

In the Middle East, Islam accepts Moses and Christ as apostles of God's message to the world. The ninety-nine attributes of God central to Islamic faith are resilient enough to include all the myriad names of God used in other religions of the world. Sikkhism, a blend of the best from Hinduism and Islam, is a pointer towards the universal religion.

Besides these synthesizing tendencies displayed by individual religions, there have been collective efforts (though feeble and ineffective) such as the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, World Fellowship of Faiths, also held in Chicago, and the World Conference of Religions held recently in Bombay. All these are a genuine expression of an obvious urgency to restore a sense of oneness of humanity and to establish a kind of universal religion.

By underlining the common core of all religions in His discourses, Bhagavan Sai has been fulfilling His self-imposed task of elevating man to nobler and divine heights from where it would be an easy step for mankind to forget the differences and live in peace.

There is yet another path, an intellectual path, which Bhagavan shows. In summer courses on spirituality and Indian culture held for students and teachers, not only Bhagavan Sai Himself delivers discourses, but several intellectuals and acknowledged authorities on various religions are asked to talk on various religions, thereby giving an opportunity to the participants in the summer course to have a glimpse into the nature of every prominent religion. Those who have an insight into things do not fail to realize the oneness of all religions.

But study of unifying elements in any single religion or a comparative study of all religions, is a path too tortuous and too exacting for man, and is often full of unsurmountable hurdles of doubt and skepticism. Faith in Sai is the surest and quickest road to universal religion. He is a living God in man's image; an Avatar in flesh and blood, of Christ or Allah or any other God known to man. We repeat all roads lead to Him and all sheep come into His fold. Then, Mankind shall attain the Kingdom of God for the mere asking. For such is His boundless love for man !

20. THE FAMILY IN THE SAI ERA

K. SHULTZ

In the world today, especially in America, the sacred role of the mother in family life has reached a deplorable status. Human family life has retreated far from the ideal which God intended for all.

The key words today are "birth control" and "woman's liberation" (from the home). Meanwhile the family unit disintegrates and so does society. Divorce and adultery are as common as marriage, due to the disturbing lack of God-oriented homes. Children are too often raised in a haphazard non-spiritual fashion. An American psychologist warns that a nation that ignores children as its greatest natural resource has no future.

Baba says, "Good mothers make a good nation." Praise be to Sai Baba, for from His all-seeing, world rejuvenation will, a counter-movement to the family disintegration is striking root in the world today. In America, India, and around the world, many spiritually-evolved young families are initiating unity through love in their homes, and are gaining fulfilment thereby. Baba's words are glistening guide posts to the new pathways which lead to wholesome family life.

The home must be a haven from the world in the turmoil of transition; it must be a stronghold of culture, health, simplicity, and above all—joy in God. The "Sai Home" is a Refuge of Love that welcomes into the family circle, Sai's "incoming" souls; these new-born children are evolved spirits, destined to inaugurate the New Era of Peace through Love. Parents must richly fertilize the soil in which these treasures—our children—are to grow, work and serve.

"The mother has to be strong in mind and body, ripe in culture with her character sanctified by holy thoughts and steeped in love and devotion." Such is the encouragement of the Lord. Children must grow up in an atmosphere of reverence, devotion, mutual service, and co-operation. Even as children they must know the amazing handiwork of God, the most amazing being themselves. Yes. It is a joy to watch one's own child growing in natural ahimsa (harmlessness, love, tolerance) toward even the smallest of God's creatures. And these children develop in the unparalleled security given by the knowledge that God Himself is here on earth to love and guide them.

Perhaps, never before has any Avatar brought such comfort to that weary lot called "mothers". I once felt disheartened by my endless tasks, and disillusioned in their purpose, but Sai Baba seemed to say, "If you, as wife and mother, do not know the art of home-making, then, you know nothing. Respond vigilantly to your home in the same way that I, the Mother of the World, care for the earth, supplying it amply, with natural loveliness." The diseases of the world have to be kept at bay, beyond the Divine Walls of the Home. We may recall the line from the Psalm and do accordingly: "I will walk within my house, with a perfect heart."

Sai Baba points out the Noble Path to all housewives, as did the ancient scriptures. Total fulfilment can be found within the realms of the home, the family, and God. In the *Dharma Vahini,* Baba has marked out the duties of the mother. It has an inspiring message for wives and mothers: "If the wife feels that the husband's home is sacred, that home itself will endow her with every skill and qualification. There is no place anywhere which excels such a home for her. One saintly poet has sung that it is her temple, her school, her playground, her political arena, her field of sacrifice, her hermitage."

Motherhood is a service that one does unto the entire universe. Women's Liberation is a household phrase today, but women shall be genuinely liberated by the Avatar in the Sai homes themselves, serving with love and care, husband and children. The female soul thereby grows towards its own self-realization. When she makes sacrifices in her own personal life for the sake of her husband and children, she learns the great lesson of the interdependence of all beings. She is blessed by an inkling, a microcosmic inkling, of the way in which God ever loves and cares for His children.

We must never think of our work, of any work, as insignificant, Sai Baba allows us to see that the arts of family life were never more needed in the world than today in this crucial phase in the career of humanity.

Baba says, "The dawn of Peace can be brought about only by learning, practising, and teaching the art of living together in peace and amity in the home. Then, peace can be established in the world, without delay and travail. Let the Satsang start with your homes."

The condition of the world is but a reflection of the condition of the family unit. With many Sai Families springing up in joy, love, and mutual service in many parts of the globe, hope is bright. Together, we are setting foot on the triumphant pilgrimage towards the Golden Era of the Lord. May Baba bless us all.

SECTION FOUR—MIRACLES EXPERIENCED BY DEVOTEES

21. LORD OF MIRACLES

DR S. BHAGVANTHAM

I have a background of science. How I reconcile this with what Bhagvan Shri Sathya Sai Baba does is a question which has troubled me much. I will relate a few things, which I hope will furnish some kind of an answer to it. It is only my personal experience. It does not mean that every rational person, or every other agnostic will go through the same process.

It is a phenomenon with Baba that each person who goes to His ashram does not go through the same process as others i.e., some take one year or two years to reconcile themselves to the situation that in Baba there is something different from ordinary persons. For some it happens in two minutes. I have seen confirmed athiests come there by chance, spend ten or fifteen minutes, and come out completely changed. The main point I want to say is, do not think that my experience, and my background, and my way of thinking, is identical with anyone else.

I have seen miracles performed by Baba, perhaps in thousands, and my long association with Him has brought me to a position where I do not attach much importance to the miracles. But for a new person who goes to Him, it is different. Nine out of ten, they are attracted by some miracle and then begin to ask, how does this happen? They start thinking, "I cannot do it, Baba is doing it, so Baba is different from me". Then they conclude, "Others cannot do it, so Baba is different from others." Going a little further—"Nobody can do it. Baba is doing it, therefore, Baba is different from anybody else."

I will narrate one or two miracles which had some significance in my own evolution, but I want to say that I have reached a stage where I have come to regard that the performance of miracles is not the best side of Baba. There is something very much deeper and very much more significant which we must know.

Let me return to the fact that I am a scientist, and have a rational way of thinking. This incident which I will narrate to you relates to several years ago, when I was very proud to be a scientist. It was just by chance that I came in contact with Baba. Somebody told me that he is a Divine person. I must caution here, scientists who think that Science means learning a discipline such as physics or chemistry, and anything else are not worth heeding. This shows a closed mind which is very contrary of what Science teaches. Science teaches that you should not have prejudice, that you should not come to a judgement before you apply your own mind to decide something. Unfortunately, many people who are half-learned come to a judgement either by using some logic, or by using somebody else's experience, without knowing and going through the matter themselves. This is very unscientific.

In March/April 1972, when Bhagvan was in Delhi, there was no place to move for about a couple of miles around the place where He was Staying. This is new. Fifteen years ago it was not like that. There were only about a hundred people one evening with Him and He said, "Shall we go for a walk?" and we walked down into Chitravati river adjoining His ashram.

We sat down on the sand. He started provoking me saying that all scientists are athiests, and all scientists want everything demonstrated before they can believe it. They ask, "Is there God?" They want to see God, they cannot see God, they say there is no God. This is what we call conjunction. Unless they see something, they do not believe it. And you also like that. Don't you believe in God? Don't you believe in Divinity? Don't you believe in our tradition and our scriptures?"

I told him, "Baba, one does not even have to learn anything to become an athiest. There are many people who are ignorant, who are not learned and who do not believe in God. There are many who are learned, and the more learned you get, the more unbelieving you become. Many people believe in God. So learning science, or learning anything has nothing to do with believing in God, or not believing in God. I come from a family of good tradition. My father and grandfather were all Sanskritists; they believed in God, yet on account of modern trends, I have learnt science to earn my living. Although I cannot say that I am a very religious man you should not conclude that I do not believe in God."

I narrated the story of a distinguished American scientist, Oppenheimer, who discovered the first atom bomb. I told him that when the first nuclear explosion occurred, Oppenheimer was asked what he thought of the nuclear explosion and it is on record that Opphenheimer quoted a verse from the *Bhagvat Gita*. He said that the brilliance is such that it can only be described in the language used by Arjuna when he had the manifestation of the Lord. Arjuna described it by saying that the brightness is as if there were one thousand suns shining in the sky.

I said, "If an American can quote an Indian text at the height of his scientific attainment, why do you think I, an Indian of a traditional family, do not respect Indian traditions and text?"

I narrate this to show that the conversation has been set by me, the place where we sat was decided by me, and the idea of *Bhagvat Gita* was brought into conversation by me. Then He said: "Oh I see. So you believe in *Bhagvat Gita,* and you, a scientist, respect *Bhagvat Gita,* read *Bhagvat Gita.*

Again, the rational in me asserted itself, and I said, "Of course I respect, of course I read it, but I will read only when I want to."

There were a hundred people sitting there and He lifted a handfull of sand with both hands and asked me to stretch out my hand

and He put the sand into my hands and under my very eyes it turned into a small text of the *Bhagvat Gita.* You can see by the sequence of events that I chose the place. I say because it could not have happened that someone planted the *Bhagvat Gita* in the sands. I brought the conversation about the *Bhagvat Gita.*

The rational in me said if it is a printed text, it must be printed in some press. I immediately asked Baba, "Baba, you said that it is a printed text of *Bhagvat Gita.* Where has it been printed?" I said this in the hope that I would be creating a small problem for Him. The man who was greatly disturbed was myself and the one who was completely undisturbed and was enjoying the conversation was Baba. He smiled and said, "Yes, it has been printed in the Sai Press". He further remarked "Well, Bhagavantam, I would like to know what science has got to say about it. In fact, it cannot say anything about what has happened."

People used to think that Baba favours some persons in authority, and I think among these hundred people there must have been four or five who thought that this gentlemen is the Director of the Institute, he has got position, and therefore, Baba is favouring Him, with this gift of *Bhagvat Gita.* Some young man asked Bhagavan, "Can I also have a *Bhagvat Gita.*" Bhagvan answered, "Yes, You can pay four annas and buy it in Bangalore."

But I cannot forget his calling on a very ordinary looking person who did not have even a shirt to wear. He was sitting in the group. He called him by name and that poor man was most surprised to be called by name. He told him: "Oh man, you are very poor, you have come here, you have been sitting under the tree in my ashram for the past four days. You are a devotee of Harnath Baba and Kusum Kumari. You have been going around begging for money as you want to build a temple for Harnath Baba in your village." All this was true. "You have come here to ask me for a donation to build the temple." He gave a long lecture to him. He said "This is very wrong. God is in everyone of us. God is in you. Why do you go in search of God.

Temples should not be built. Particularly, you should not ask for temples to be built. Do not do this. Go back home and I will give you an image of Harnath Baba. Put it in your own puja room and worship him, but do not build a temple. God does not live in temples unless he lives in your own heart." He gave him a long lecture, as He would give to any devotee. But I was still thinking of, the *Bhagvat Gita*. He must have brought it here and given it to me, I thought.

To teach me a lesson what He did was this. This individual was wearing a badge on which there was Harnath Baba and Kusum Kumari, because he was collecting money for building a temple. Bhagavan lifted again some sand, and that became a silver image of Harnath Baba and Kusum Kumari, and first He gave it to me. He said, "I have done it for my friend and you have a look at it." I had a look at the badge. It was an identical replica of the badge which he was wearing. I even found that on Kusum Kumari the badge contained a round red tilak, a symbol of womanhood and there was a red tilak on the face of the silver image He produced.

He knew that I would examine every detail to see whether He had produced a replica or had brought Kusum Kumari's image from somewhere. He knew that. So, I satisfied myself that in every detail it was a complete reproduction of the badge which the poor man was wearing. He looked at me, smiled and asked, "Are you satisfied? Has science got to say anything about it?" Then He took it from me and He gave it to the poor man.

This again demonstrates that in the presence of divinity, position and authority do not count, poverty and riches do not count. It is only devotion and the grace of God that counts. And if He choses, He will certainly give this grace to a man of position as well as to a man who does not count at all. He told him, "Do not beg for money. Begging is not good. Do not search for God. God is in your home. Go back, put it in your puja room and worship it," and so on. This was one of several occasions when He said to me, "What has science to say about this?"

This went on year after year. One day we were sitting on the shores of Cape Comerin. On the sea shore there were about twenty people around Him. He was playing with the water in the sea. He was asking some people how we address the ocean. One young man said that the ocean is called "Ratnakara". Then He commented "If it is called Ratnakara, it must contain ratnas or diamonds, and the ocean should give us diamonds." I said, "Yes Baba, if you wish. You can get diamonds." The people present wanted to see how He was going to get diamonds from the ocean." Oh, yes, He said, in His leela, in a childish way, and took a hand full of water from the ocean, and the water became a beautiful little diamond necklace in His hands. He showed it to me and said, "What shall we do with it?"

Even then I could see that the production of the necklace itself was pretty difficult. When He asked what should be done with it, I noticed that the necklace was a small one, and as He has a big head I thought I must ask him to wear it. Then He said, "Oh, I see, I should wear it." Then he held the necklace tight in His hand. It became a bigger necklace and He put it around His head and looked at me and said, "Well I have worn it."

I can relate several such incidents at the end of which He was generous enough to recognize that I have this conflict in me of trying to reconcile two opposing points of view. This went on for three years, and at the end of the three years, at a public meeting in Madras, where there were more than 10,000 people present, I was forced to admit that as a man of science I tried to find a rational and logical explanation for all that I had seen, but I had failed. There are many things which science cannot explain, things which are beyond science. Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba is not subject to the ordinary laws of science. He is beyond science and what He does cannot be explained by normal means. Thereafter He stopped performing miracles for me.

Science, which has tremendous amount of logic, and is very useful has its limitations. It deals with things which relate to your five senses of perception, but there are many things which do not come under the purview of the normal senses of perception, such as emotion or intuition. If a man comes and says, "I feel that the grace of God has saved me from a catastrophy," a scientist can only throw up his hands in despair and say, "I do not understand."

Another interesting facet of Baba is his ability to be present at different places at the same time. Physical presence is something which I cannot really describe. I can explain history, but divinity cannot be explained. The few who have had personal experience of being in the presence of Bhagvan Shri Sathya Sai Baba know that there can never be a substitute for experiencing divinity directly with Bhagvan Baba. I say this because I have had a chance of talking to a number of people, and they are so immensely happy. Some of the young people come out and say that they have never seen anyone including their own mother and father or their families, expressing so much affection and in such a way. This cannot be expressed. It can only be experienced. These days all our leaders—political, social and religious go on the platform and preach so many things which they themselves do not practise.

Baba says, treat everyone like yourself, love everyone, shower grace and prema on everyone. In fact He says that there is one religion in this world and that is the religion of love or prema. If you learn to love humanity as part and parcel of yourself, then you have realized God in every human being. You go to Him and sit with Him for five minutes and you find Him exhibiting this, practicing this, in a manner in which no human being can practice.

The other extraordinary quality which Baba possesses is his enormous patience in dealing with the problems of people. On an average He sees at least two hundred people per day. I have verified that the two hundredth man is as happy as the first man and hundred and ninety-nine people, and has specially spent a little more time with him. This is not humanly possible This can only be a quality of divinity. On festival days there are 50,000 people and quite a few are aged and sick. Yet, Baba never suffers by seeing pain or delights in seeing success. He is tranquil and steady; nothing affects Him. You can see Him smiling at the end of a hard day's work. He preaches Karma Yoga. He preaches Action. He preaches that you should work hard and do your duty, as work is worship and duty is God.

22. SAI BABA AND THE RESURRECTION OF WALTER COWAN

ELSIE COWAN

We have come back from India, my husband and I, brimfull of the most astonishing news that could happen to anyone. It is so fantastic that many may doubt it, because hardly any of us realize the great importance and the tremendous power of this Great High God, who not only walks the earth, but cares for all the planes from earth into eternity. He gives us strength and power He is compassionate. But most of all, He gives us the protection, which is His Grace. In time of need, He wraps His Grace around us like a very warm blanket, soft and lovely, to soothe us into a state of bliss. Without Him there would be no one to turn to; no father to ask; and even greater than that, at the very deepest feelings, He makes us strong. There are no tears, for the body goes back to the earth.

This is a story of how our Great Lord Sai Baba resurrected Walter, who died in Madras. Little did we know what was going to happen at the time, and when it did happen, what could I say but, "Where would I rather die, than at the feet of this Great, Great Lord?" It is a blessing to know that the Great Lord takes care of us, places us where we should be placed, or else as in this case, after several hours, He brings one back to life as he did Walter, my husband.

There were many people present, but Jack Hislop was there throughout almost the entire experience. Since he is a wonderful devotee, and is very, very close to our Lord, Sai Baba, I have asked Jack to tell the story as a third party.

JACK HISLOP'S ACCOUNT OF THIS EVENT

"*Dear Elsie Cowan*, this is a letter in response to your request that I say what I know about your husband's experience in India, while you were there in December of 1971 and January of 1972. My name is Jack Hislop. I live in Mexico. My wife and I had visited Sathya Sai Baba a number of times in the past, and we will be there again in 1972. We returned from India on February 27th of this year, after some four months with Sathya Sai Baba.

As I recall, Walter and you arrived in Madras on 23 December 1971, and came to the building where Baba was holding a conference with some 3,000 presidents of his Seva Samitis. Baba at once came to you and gave Walter and yourself a warm and affectionate greeting. Walter was obviously not feeling well, and ushers had provided chairs as soon as you arrived. Thus, you were quite visible amidst the great crowd of people, all of whom were sitting on the floor, as is the custom in India.

On the morning of the 25th of December, news quickly spread that an elderly American had had a fatal attack of what was thought to be heart trouble, and had passed away. Upon hearing the rumour, my wife and I at once went to your hotel. You confirmed the news, and told us how the attack had felled Walter in the hotel room. You had prayed to Sathya Baba for help at this most trying moment of your life, but with great self-control and recollection of human mortality, had ended your prayer with —"Let God's will be done." You at once remembered that Mr and Mrs Ratan Lal were staying in a room almost next door to your room, and you called her. Mrs Ratan Lal came immediately. With her help, you summoned a room boy, and Walter was lifted from the floor to the bed. Mrs Ratan Lal joined you in prayer for it was soon evident to you that Walter had indeed passed away from the body.

Someone called an ambulance to take Walter to the hospital, but it was your experience that Walter had died in your arms, soon after having been lifted from the floor to the bed, and you were so exhausted that you could not accompany the then lifeless body into the ambulance. These events had taken place in the early morning hours of 25 December. But at 7 a.m. you had recovered sufficient strength to go with Mrs Ratan Lal to Baba's place of residence to tell him the news and ask for his advice and help. Baba said he would visit the hospital about 10 a.m.

At 10 a.m., Mrs Ratan Lal accompanied you to the hospital, but you were told that Baba had already been there, and had left just before you arrived. Upon entering the hospital, you found Walter alive. That Walter was alive at 10 a.m. on 25 December is certain. But how about his death? Was there medical verification that he had died? After all, two ladies—very much upset at a tragic event—could not, perhaps, make the same tests for life as would a medical doctor not personally involved in the emotional impact of the situation.

To clarify this point, at my request, Judge Damodar Rao of Madras interviewed the doctor who had attended Walter when he arrived at the hospital. This attending physician is well-known to Judge Damodar Rao personally, and the doctor told Judge Rao that Walter was indeed dead when he had examined Walter shortly after the ambulance had delivered him to the hospital. The doctor said there was no sign of life; that he pronounced Walter as dead; that Walter's ears and nose were stuffed with cotton; that Walter was covered with a sheet and moved into an empty room.

The doctor then left the hospital on some professional duty, and had missed seeing Baba when He was at the hospital. The doctor arrived back at the hospital after Baba had left. When the doctor returned to the hospital, Walter was alive. The doctor found himself unable to explain this situation. It seemed worthwhile to me to make an investigation for medical verification of Walter's death, because such verification might be a factor of interest to people who had never seen Sathya Sai

Baba, and who might have a very limited knowledge of him. But, medical testimony is not a factor of any importance to devotees of Baba. To his devotees, what He said about Mr Cowan was the truth of the matter.

I saw Baba at His place of residence after He had returned from the hospital. He told me and others within hearing that Walter Cowan had died; that the hospital had stuffed his ears and nose with cotton, and covered him with a sheet, and put the body in a closed room. Baba said that He had brought Walter back to life. I did not inquire of Baba as to how he had brought Walter back to life, or his reasons for doing so, nor to the best of my knowledge, did anyone else. That is a mystery that Baba has not as yet chosen to explain.

There was a later occurrence of great interest to me. A day later on 26 December, Appa and I accompanied Baba to the home of a devotee. From there, we went to a meeting of lady members of the Nigara Sai Samiti, where Baba was to give awards and speak. Appa and I were sitting on the platform, just a few feet from Baba and were able to closely observe him. He made the awards and gave a spiritual discourse, all without any break or any moment of hesitation. From the meeting, we were to go to the home of another devotee for lunch.

As soon as we got in the car, Baba turned to us and said, "While I was talking in the meeting, Mrs Cowan called me. I at once went to the hospital and did what was necessary. Mr Cowan's health had taken a turn for the worse." So, even while busy on the speaker's platform, Baba had gone to the hospital, and had done what was necessary. But, to the eyes of Shri Appa and myself, Baba had continued in action and speech on the platform for the whole time there, without any break or hesitation whatsoever. How does one explain this mystery? When we arrived at the devotee's house for lunch, Baba turned to us and said, "You will not be able to join me for lunch. Take this vibhuti to the hospital, and give Mr Cowan some in his mouth and rub the rest on his forehead and chest. If you walk to the corner over there you will find Mrs Hislop there in a taxi. She will take you to the hospital."

Now the fact was, that my wife had been following Baba in a taxi. However, she had taken great pains to stay out of sight, but her effort was to no avail for as usual, Baba knew everything. When we reached the hospital with the vibhuti, Mrs Cowan said, "Walter took a very bad turn just a little while ago. I thought he was dead, and I was terrified. I at once called Baba in a loud tone of voice. Now Walter seemed a little improved. When I called Baba, I felt his presence at once." By saying this, Elsie, you independently corroborated Baba's statement in the car, to Shri Appa and myself.

A week or so later, I was speaking with Baba at Prashanthi Nilayam. Walter and you were still in Madras and Walter was in the hospital. Baba said, "Today I received a telegram from Mrs Cowan. Mr Cowan was in very serious condition again. I answered the telegram. Mr Cowan will be out of the hospital soon, and will come to Bangalore. It is my Sankalpa, my Will." Of course, Elsie, that was no physical telegram. The telegram was your prayer. In the same conversation, Baba said, "Mr Cowan died three times. I had to bring him back three times."

Walter and you did indeed come to Bangalore, and you were waiting at the West End Hotel when my wife and I returned there from Prashanthi Nilayam. To our eyes, Walter appeared to be extraordinarily well. The next morning, when we went out to visit Baba at Whitefield I reported Walter's condition to him. He said, "Tell nobody that you will ride into Bangalore with me in the late afternoon, and I will visit Mr Cowan. Send your wife on ahead in a taxi."

Baba did visit Mr Cowan, and visited him a second time a few days later. Then Baba told you that Mr Cowan was strong enough to make the fifteen mile drive out to Whitefield each morning, and that he was to return to the hotel at noon each day and rest during the afternoon. Dr Gnaneswaran, with whom my wife and I had been acquainted for several years, was your attending physician in Bangalore. He counted himself extremely fortunate because he was in the room when Baba visited Walter, and you graciously allowed him to bring his family also inside the room in order to have Baba's darshan. Then, some time later, by virtue of being Walter's physician, Dr Gnaneswaran was able to be inside Baba's house at Whitefield when Baba performed the very beautiful and very significant Vedic wedding ceremony for Walter and yourself.

Dr Gnanneswaran had Walter's medical history, with its specific laboratory tests, showing severe diabetes of long standing, and various other diseased conditions. After assuming his responsibility as your Bangalore physician, he—as a standard medical man—rechecked the findings of Walter's American doctors with his own laboratory tests, He could scarcely believe the results of the laboratory tests. Not only were the diabetic symptoms completely absent, but the tests of other diseased conditions were similarly negative. He explained, "Only the Divine Baba—only God himself could do this."

The extraordinary fact seems to be that, when the total organism that was Walter Cowan died, the only entity that returned to life was Walter himself. Walter's various diseases died with him, but the diseases were not reborn; only Walter was reborn. A most marvellous and inscrutable event, is it not? All of the foregoing does not, of course, imply that Walter's physical body has become immortal. Of course, he has had some bad days. At times he has become overtired, and at other times has suffered perhaps because of an injudicious meal. After all, it is not a teenage body; it is an aged body, but nevertheless, a great miracle really happened.

Walter is alive again, free of disease, and filled with enthusiasm to tell people about the Divine Presence of Shri Sathya Sai Baba. Walter's mental state has also changed. Both you and he agree that Walter was one of the world's champion worriers. He was filled with worry that this or that unfortunate event might occur, and filled with worries and fears lest desired situations might not occur. Now, according to both Walter and yourself, Walter is calm, free of worry, and has no fear of death, or of any other happening. The so-called new body we can see. But, what about this new mental state?

According to Walter, a very intense experience brought about the changed mind. While lying dead at the Madras Hospital, with only a very faint consciousness remaining visible to yourself, who was sitting there, this very strange experience came about. Walter left the body, as in death. Baba was beside him. Together they went to a place, and there appeared to be a Court of Law there. There was a panel of individuals and a Presiding Chairman. This Chairman was very kind in appearance and voice. He called for the Register relating to Walter Cowan, and the records were produced, and they were read in the various languages appropriate to the time of their recording. At first, the various languages were unintelligible to Walter, and he was not aware that the recitation referred to him. At some point in the recital, Baba started to translate, and Walter then realized that it was himself who was the subject of the recital. Walter was amazed to hear that he had played roles throughout the ages as emperor, as spiritual leader, dedicated always to the good of the people. At the end of the recital, Baba addressed the panel and the Chairman, saying that he had a role for Walter, and that Walter should be released from death into the care of Baba.

During this experience, a feeling of great peace came upon Walter, and he realized that his essential being was immortal, and that he was not this temporary body. Thus, fear dropped away and Walter now remains peaceful and without worry. After hearing Walter tell this experience, I asked Baba if Walter had had this actual experience. Baba replied, "The experience was a real experience, not an illusion. It was an experience occurring within Mr Cowan's mind, and I was, myself, there—directing and clarifying the thoughts." I then asked if every person had a similar experience and some did not.

There is something most interesting here. At the time Walter recounted his experience to my wife and myself, neither of you, that is, neither Walter nor yourself, had seen Volume Seven of *Sathya Sai Speaks*. It had just been published, and it had not as yet been sent to America. Yet, in it Baba made a statement about the mind that exactly corroborates Walter's quite independent and uniquely personal experience. The following is an extract from *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Volume VII, p. 468. It is a portion of a talk given in Telegu in February 1971, at Prashanthi Nilayam:

> The mind plays many tricks with you, the chief of which is to foster the ego and hide the Prompter and the Power within. You must have heard of an Accountant in the Court of the King of Death, Chithragupta, by name. He maintains a Register of the Good and the Bad done by each living being, and on death, he brings the books to the Court and strikes the balance between debit and credit. Yama, the King, then meets out the punishment that can expiate and educate. This Chitragupta has his office in the mind of man, all the time, awake, alert. The word means, 'the secret picture'; what he does is to 'picture' all the secret promptings that blossom into activity; he notes the warning signals, as well as the occasions when those signals were ignored or wantonly disregarded. You must see that the warning of the Divine against the merely human, or even the bestial inclinations are heeded.

Thus Walter had a most extraordinary experience in December 1971 and January 1972. Both of you know directly the Divine Grace of Shri Sathya Sai Baba. *Jack Hislop*".

WALTER COWAN'S ACCOUNT OF HIS RESURRECTION

"While in the Connemara Hotel in Madras, two days after I arrived, I was taken very sick with pneumonia and was in bed. As I gasped for breath, suddenly the body's struggle was over, and I died. I found myself very calm, in a state of wonderful bliss, and the Lord, Sai Baba, was by my side. Even though my body lay on the bed, dead, my mind kept working throughout until Baba brought me back. There was no anxiety or fear, but a tremendous sense of well-being, for I had lost all fear of death.

Baba took me to a very large hall where there were hundreds of people milling around. It was the hall where all of the records of all my lives were kept. Baba and I stood before the Court of Justice. The one in charge knew Baba very well, and He asked for the records of all my lives. He was very nice and kind, and I had the feeling that whatever was decided would be the best for my soul.

The records were brought into the hall—armloads of scrolls—and all of them seemed to be in different languages. As they were read, Baba interpreted them. In the beginning, they told me of countries that have not existed for thousands of years, and I could not recall them. When they reached King David, the reading of my lives became more exciting. I could hardly believe how great I apparently was in each life that followed. As they continued reading my lives, it seemed that what really counted was my motives and character, as I stood for outstanding peace and spirituality. I do not remember all the names, but I am included in almost all of the history books of the world from the beginning of time. As I incarnated in the different countries, I carried out my mission—which was peace and spirituality.

After about two hours, they finished reading the scrolls, and the Lord, Sai Baba, said that I had not completed the work that I was born to do, and He asked the Judge that I be turned over to Him to complete my mission of spreading the Truth; and he requested that my soul be returned to my body, under Baba's Grace. The Judge said, "So be it." The case was dismissed and I left with Baba to return to my body. I hesitated to leave this wonderful bliss, but I knew it was best to complete my mission so that I could merge with the Lord, Sai Baba.

I related the story to Elsie at once, and she recorded it. I also talked it over with Baba, and He said it was not my imagination—it was a true experience. My life goes on now under the Grace of Sai Baba, whom I adore and to whom I owe my life. *Walter R. Cowan.*"

23. IN THE ALTAR OF YOUR HEART

PROF. N. KASTURI

"Who am I?" asked Shri Sathya Sai Baba once in a letter and answered, "I am yours." "What is mine?" He continued, and answered, "You." "Where do I reside?" was the next question, and His reply was, "In the altar of your heart." "Where do I cast my glance?" "All round." "What is my task?" was the last of the questions and the answer He gave was, "To help the devotees to live happily and guide them along the path of liberation till they attain the Goal." Those who have known Baba's overwhelming love, His enthusiasm for curing and consoling, and His efforts to induce all who come into contact with Him to rebuild themselves on stronger foundations of discipline and morality will certainly recognize these answers as the best summary of what Baba is to them.

At the age of fourteen He walked out of school and home, declaring, "My work is urgent; it can't wait. My devotees are calling me." This was in 1940. Ever since, lakhs of persons have won His grace but each of them has felt that Baba had a special attachment to him. "I am yours," He says. "Demand grace from me as of right; there is no need to fawn or flatter." He spends His time wherever He is instructing, inspiring, correcting, encouraging spiritual aspirants, alleviating mental and physical pain, comforting distracted minds, or repairing and healing damaged or broken individuals and families. "This is the task for which I have come. Make full use of me while you have the chance," He exhorts.

He leaves His body and rushes to the side of those who call on Him for guidance or relief. Listen to Charles Penn of Pacific

Palisades, California, who has been receiving regular lessons on sadhana. "On the morning of 20 September 1965, He said, 'Before starting on Brahmamarga and commencing your sadhana disrobe. Cast the clothings of jealousy, hate, anger, pride, greed, desire. But you shall not be cold; for you still have one garment on—the garment of Love.' " He allows nothing to stand in the way of His journeys to assuage the afflicted. On many an occasion, He has left His body 'fall' and, with the sukshma sarira (subtle body) or some other appropriate body, enacted the role of saviour at the scene of the probable calamity.

He identifies Himself so fully with all that the declaration "I yours" is profondly true. Like the Sai Baba of Shirdi, who He announces Himself to be, Baba takes upon Himself the illness of those whom He wants to protect. On 29 June 1963, he had an "attack" of cerebral thrombosis which incapaciatated the left half of the body. He was "unconscious" for three days, four "heart attacks" occurred during the week. The learned specialist who examined Him pronounced it as tubercular meningitis, which He could scarcely survive.

July 6 was sacred Guru Purnima, when about four thousand devotees from all parts of India assembled to have His darshan, and Baba insisted that He be carried down the winding stairs into the prayer hall. Leaning on two men, with a third lifting the left foot for the platform step, the left hand limp by His side, his face wrapped in a handkerchief which curbed the grand halo of hair, blinding one eye, his muscles switching with palsy, his right palm always shaking, Baba was placed on the silver chair and propped with pillows. When He flopped to one side even the bravest wept. The lolling tongue could not shape what He wanted to say. I interpreted it and announced to the gathering what he was trying to communicate. "I never fall ill, do not fear, do not grieve."

He signalled for the microphone to be held before Him; but His futile attempts to speak only intensified the atmosphere of grief. Baba wanted water, and when this was brought in a silver tumbler, He put His palsied right hand in it and sprinkled the water on the limp left arm and on the left leg. The left arm could now be bent. He stroked the left leg with both hands and sat up, casting pillows aside. He could see now with both eyes and speak in that melodious voice of His. Starting His speech with the usual "Premaswarupulara," He continued for over an hour. His first sentence was, "Since the Lord is the refuge of the forlorn, I had to take on myself this illness and the heart attacks, for the sufferer would not have survived them." He had doffed the disease as quickly as He had donned it.

The answer, "I reside in the altar of your heart," does not mean simply that He is the Ishtadeva of many. No, Baba means that He is the Antaryamin, the inner motivator in all beings. When once asked whether the siddhi which makes Him aware of the inner workings of other minds could be learned by sadhana, Baba replied, "This is no siddhi or power. I do not get into your mind and emerge with the knowledge of what goes on inside it. I am there all the time. You can do nothing without my being aware of it."

Of course it is difficult to realize how He, who has assumed this human form, can also be the resident of every heart. Baba warns us against glib explanations of this mystery. He wishes that we should study the shastras carefully, so that we can unravel it. "If you know yourself you can know me too; for your truth is the truth of the universe as well as my truth." Perhaps the Vedic dictum, "Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati" (He who has known Brahman becomes Brahman himself) may afford a clue. One thing is certain, the glimpses of glory that we get when we are with Baba, watching His activities, the flashes of illumination we experience when we listen to His comments, these remind us of the description that Shri Krishna gives of Himself in the Bhagavat Gita and of nothing less.

Baba has said that His glance "falls all round." He sees everywhere. How else can we explain the showers of vibhuti that fall from His pictures in the shrines of devotees in a hundred different towns and villages all over world? How else can we explain the long flash of blinding light that emerged from His picture when a former Chairman of the Shirdi Samsthan had hesitated, underneath that picture, to have vibhuti brought from Satya Sai Baba put on his tongue? He is in every picture of His.

As a correspondent wrote in *The Illustrated Weekly* (3 October 1965), Baba appeared twice in a week at a house in Manjeri, Kerala, and stayed for hours, talking, resting, singing, consoling, teaching, and granting boons, when all the while He was also at Venkatagiri and Whitefield. He dismisses this phenomenon with the explanation, "It may appear strange to you, but to Me it is My very nature. It is just My way. When I want a thing, I wave My hand. When I want to get a thing done, I just will it. When I want to go to a place, I just go." Unless you know the way the universal and the infinite behaves, you cannot understand Him.

Now about the answer to the last question of the series. "My work is to help the devotees to live happily." The devotees have sufficient education to know that happiness is not won by the pursuit of sensory pleasures. It is a treasure of the inner consciousness won by sadhana, by the contemplation of the source of all the happiness, the Lord. Baba grants this superior vision and promotes self control and self knowledge by timely warnings and advice.

"My work is to guide them along the path of liberation, till they attain the goal." Twenty-five years ago, He announced that this was the mission on which He had come again. He names it Dharmasthapana (establishment of norms for social and individual progress), Sadhuposhana (fostering the good and spiritually minded), Dinapalana (protection of the humble and the detached), and Vedodharana (revival of the study and practice of scriptural discipline). His overwhelming pity and affection towards the human community which has strayed into the wilderness shines through every word that He utters, every letter He writes, every deed He does.

Even a hundred cynics cannot escape this influence towards a more meaningful progressive life filled with love and service to one's fellow men. Baba's supremely eloquent discourses carry right into the hearts of lakhs of fascinated followers the message of the basic unity of all life, indeed of all creation. "Faulty vision alone makes us see the one as many; Man fell when he saw the one as many; he will rise when his vision is corrected. Tat (that) and Twam (you) are the same; Sarvam Brahmanayam (all Brahman); Naiha Nanasti Kinchana (there is no 'many' here; there is only one)." Such is the ancient lesson that Baba teaches us today.

Baba recognizes the pundits of India who have learnt this ancient wisdom in the traditional manner, as useful instruments for human uplift. They have been neglected far too long; they have become dispirited by poverty and lack of reverence. Their number too is fast declining. So Baba has given them fresh significance, a new purpose in life—to instruct the men and women of our land and of the world in "the science of contented living" and "the steps for the acquisition of an unruffled mind," as a preliminary to the realization of the self.

I have been, since 1948, a witness of the ever widening horizon of Baba's glory. Since 1958, I have spent all my waking hours in His august presence. I have heard His thrilling discourses at Trivendrum and Badrinath and at scores of places. I have been enraptured by their wisdom, their universal outlook, their sweetness and lucidity. I have seen eminent scholars of the land awe-struck at the profundity of His interpretations and the appropriateness of His explanations of rituals and rules. I have experienced first hand many a miracle which stuns science. My wonder, my joy, my faith—these are growing every day with more proofs of His powers, wisdom and grace. Each day I am aware of a miracle grander than I have known, a pronouncement from his lips profounder than I have heard so far, an alchemy which transforms someone's character. That is the good fortune that I invite you to share with me.

24. THE GOD IN HUMAN FORM

A.M. ROY

Much has been said and written about Baba. There is nothing new which I can add or spell out. But here are my feelings, which I cannot help expressing, and which I want to share with Baba's devotees, and specially those who have not yet been privileged and fortunate to have His darshan, sparshan and sambhashan.

Baba says: "Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema are the four most important requirements for a man's progress. The combination of these is love." It is through that one can tide over any bridge, travelling smoothly in this world. But this love should be spiritual love—daiva prema.

This is an age in which science and technology predominate. But in the spiritual field, India is the only country that has flourished, and is able to show the path. The essence of all philosophies, the essence of all thoughts, the essence of being, of Vedic tradition have all been preserved through generations.

Sathya Sai Speaks teaches how to live a good and modest life full of humility. There are number of books on Baba's teachings. One has to read the pages, go through the lines, understand and apply these in day-to-day life. Baba does not say anything new. The same doctrines which our old prophets have said are all there. And one need not toil hard to go through the verses of the Vedas and Upanishads. Where is the time in this world? People are so occupied and busy in their problems. So here is everything in a common man's language. One should keep aside a few minutes from ones activities and utilise this time in going through the pages of Baba's teachings. Here one can see Baba in living form as a living Lord, through His teachings and enjoy Bliss.

People should not miss the opportunity in their life of having His darshan—His divine leelas. For those who cannot, it does not matter—they should pray for His divine darshan and blessings. If the urge is there, and devotion true and sincere, Baba will always be with them. He says, "Why fear when I am here". Have faith; have confidence; have courage, Baba will always be with you.

There are people who enjoy His grace, even though they don't have the opportunity of seeing His divinity and experiencing His leelas. Here again, unless He wishes nothing can happen. "An experiencer can only experience the experience which he has experienced," said my revered Guru in one of His Gita lectures. This is cent per cent true. It varies from man to man.

Baba does not want anyone to follow His teachings blindly, unless one has experienced Him. He says, "Come, examine, experience and get yourself convinced and then if you feel like, then only follow me." He even goes one step further, for He says: "You need not even follow me, follow your own Ishtadevat. I will be with you." So, why worry? Take refuge in Him, surrender yourself at His Lotus Feet.

Complete surrender to Baba in every case has the desired result. Karmaphal (the fruit of Karmas) has to be undergone. Baba's grace will reduce the extent of one's agonies and at the same time increase the extent of Bliss depending upon the deeds of one's past life. The real urge, the true devotion, the sincere innermost desire to have His darshan, sparshan and sambhasan in almost all cases have the desired result. Thousands and thousands have been benefitted with His grace, loving care, and affection. So why not you? Time is running fast. You may not get this opportunity again in your life. So avail it with all possible haste.

We have known Baba for seven years. We have had varied experiences, and have been graced by Him profusely. We have experienced in our own life, whenever we really wanted His help, His grace coming forth automatically. There is no end of our experiences. There will be no end of His miracles. To cite but a few instances, we have experienced Baba showing us the way in the guise of an old man and a little girl on our first visit to Prashanthi Nilayam. He even made the connecting air plane late by more than 90 minutes so that we could be at His Lotus Feet on a particular day. He also arranged for petrol for our car which stopped midway.

Baba, as we have experienced Him, sows the seed of love among Sai devotees. The Namasaranam which He gives top preference is the solace. Through bhajans and singing His glory we are drawn nearer to each other and love grows. The love and affection which we share defies description.

There is no end of Baba's grace. Before I conclude, I would also like to say, Baba gives much stress to discipline. He says duty, devotion, and discipline go together to pave the road to success.

So let us all join hands together and sing Baba's glory. "Premse Bolo Jai Baba Jai, Bhavise Bolo Jai Baba Jai, Jai Jai Jai Sai Baba Jai Bolo."

Let us all chant "Sai Ram" with full confidence and love. Let Sai Ram be on one's lips always in good or bad days, in fair or foul weather. Remember Him, think about Him every day just for a few moments. And He will always be with us as He is always there to show us the light and correct path and guard us from all evils.

25. THE ADVENT OF SAI BABA

K.M. BALA SUBRAMANIAN

Avajananti Mammudha manushim tanuu asritam
Param bhavam ajanan to mama bhuta maheswaram

Gita IX. 11

Shri Krishna Bhagavan, through the above declaration, sounds a caution to all men and women against the blabberings of fools. "Fools belittle Me as one taken the human form, not aware of My higher nature as the great Lord of beings." The Paramatman is the common basis of the entire creation and He occasionally assumes a human form and seems to be enshrined in it. Unaware of the Divine Leela the ordinary human folk treat the avatar as earth bound and slight Him. Sri Ramakrishna Paramhamsa mentioned that "Incarnations like Shri Krishna have the human and the Divine combined in them. While appearing as human they are the transcendental Divine, unaffected by Karma and things mundane." What is said about Shri Krishna avatar is equally true of Shri Sathya Sai avatar. Of the billions of human beings, only a blessed few have been able to pierce through this veil of delusion and cognize the Descent of the Lord in human form.

Among the obstacles which cloud thinking, the misconception about the Advaita philosophy is the most prominent. To an ordinary Advaitin, avatarhood and Advaita philosophy cannot coexist. This mistake occurs if one does not differentiate what is potential and what is real. Everyone is potentially divine. Nobody can deny this. However, engulfed in Maya, each one of us tends to identify the self with the body and in this process, we are not able to realize our potential Divinity. As Baba often says, "You are all God and My efforts are to lift you up to Divinity." Manava has to become Madhava and often Madhava has to take the human form to lead Manava to Madhavahood. There lies the relevance of the advent of avatars.

In this context, the sayings of Swami Vivekananda, one of the greatest exponents of Advaita philosophy, are worth repeating. He says:

> There is a special class of world teachers, over and above the ordinary spiritual masters, avatars. If they command, even the lowliest of the low becomes a mahatma. They are the teachers of teachers. They are the highest divine manifestations in human form. We can achieve God-realisation only through them. We cannot but worship them; in fact we are bound to worship only such avatars.

Emphasizing further the need to worship God in human form, the Swami continues:

> There are two types of persons who do not worship God in human form, viz: (*i*) a human being who has no religious consciousness, and (*ii*) a paramahamsa who has reached the highest spiritual plane identifying his own self with all manifestations of Divinity and nature.

Everyone in between these two extremes has to worship God in human form. "If anybody refuses to recognise and worship these avatars (God in human form), he deserves one's sympathy and is to be treated as such," says Vivekananda.

Having studied the case for worshipping God in a human form, let us refresh ourselves with some of the revelations of Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba made by Himself to declare His Divine identity.

To those familar with *Sathya, Sivam, Sundaram* (Parts I, II, and III) no further proof is necessary to recognize Baba as God in human form. The history of mankind shows that every avatar had to declare His divine identity. Shri Krishna declared His identity through the *Gita,* the Govardhana Giri episode and all His bala leelas including the killing of the demons.

Shri Rama declared His identity through His Lakshamana-Upadesha, the killing of a lakh and odd demons under Khara-Dooshana in one and a half hours single-handed. His encounter with Parasurama etc. etc. Jesus Christ had to declare that He was Son of God and there was no difference between Father and Son. Prophet Mohamed had to declare that He was a Messenger of God. Baba's declaration at the World Conference of Sathya Sai Organizations in Bombay that He was the Sarva Devata Swarupa may be recalled. Even Ramakrishna Paramhamsa had to convince the doubting Swami Vivekananda during His last moments that it was the same divine spirit which took the form of Rama and Krishna that had taken the form of Ramakrishna. Thus every avatar had to declare His identity. Except a few rishis, nobody could fathom the advent of avatars.

During his avatarhood, Baba has revealed His omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience to all His devotees either individually or collectively to confirm their conviction of His Divinity so that they may be led to His Lotus Feet ultimately. Appearance of vibhuti, kumkum, Holy water, honey, turmeric powder, lockets, etc. from His photos worshipped by devotees throughout the world are some of the indications of His omnipresence.

This humble devotee had the good fortune of experiencing the above divine manifestations at his shrine. Just before the bhajans start on Thursdays, vibhuti used to appear on the cloth spread for Him to walk on. Even His footprints used to appear clear on this vibhuti. Vibhuti appears from the chair and foot-rest reserved for Him. All these manifestations are declarations of His divinity and His presence. Readers may recall Baba's conversation in Swahili with an African during His East African visit. He is Sarvantaryamin, no doubt. Nobody can hide thoughts from Him, leave alone actions.

This humble devotee would like to share one of his spiritual experiences with his readers to reiterate Baba's Divinity. Some years back I was on an official visit to Kanya Kumari. I repeated the Sai Ram Mantra almost throughout the night. Early morning I went to see the sun rise. Wonder of wonders! From the rising sun, the shape of Baba with His flowing robe appeared and spread throughout the sky. I saw this vision even before seeing Baba in His physical form. After this incident, I visited Prasanthi Nilayam and saw in the Prayer Hall a replica of the vision seen at Kanya Kumari. The title of that picture was "Prabhatam." Such is Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba's might, majesty and glory.

26. CLOSER TO GOD

NEETA ROY

We first heard about Baba from our good friends, the Hariharans. They came in contact with Him when they were in Madras and were fortunate enough to have His grace and blessings. They would occasionally narrate to the members of our family some remarkable and uncommon incidents about Baba, and we listened with simple curiosity.

On reading Sudha Majumdar's book on Sai Baba we were more eager to know about Him. At that time bhajans were regularly held at Geeta Bhawan and we started attending them. Gradually we found it grew on us like a passion, and felt uneasy if we could not go. At least for an hour in a week we forgot everything else.

Gradually we came to know some of the members, and as our interest in Sai Baba grew, we felt inclined to meet Him.

Hariharan had been to Prasanti Nilayam. He gave us Baba's picture—in a half inclined posture with a smiling face and raising His right hand assuring protection. From whatever angle I looked at the picture it seemed He was gazing at me!

We were keen on going to Baba, but we learnt from Hariharan that it was as difficult to go there as also to stay. My husband wanted to go there in September—either on his birthday or during the Nava Ratri. The latter date attracted him more because the Hariharans would also be going. I must admit that I did not have implicit faith nor that strength of confidence. We talked about the programme in August. A reply-paid telegram to Shri Kasturi fetched the information that Baba would be at Nilayam in September.

We took mother in confidence to tell her where we were going. To the rest it was told that we would go to Madras on business. We were so excited about our journey to Baba. The place was absolutely unknown to us, and we had no idea what situations we may have to face. All the necessary arrangements were ready on Saturday, the 6th September. We were in bed. It was about 11-30 p.m. I woke up with the ringing of the call bell to hear a voice "Telegram." I woke up Roy, my husband and said, "It's possibly Baba's telegram." I do not know why and how the idea flashed in my mind. The telegram was opened and read "Bhagavan leaving tour." The sender's name was not mentioned. The rest of the night was spent sleepless, not knowing who sent the telegram. The very idea that we would not be able to go disappointed us terribly.

Next morning Roy tried to get the phone number of Prasanthi Nilayam and Whitefield. We wished to find out where Baba had gone and follow Him. We tried our level best for the connection to Prasanthi Nilayam, but in vain. Though we got Whitefield, the line was not clear, and we were told Baba was out. Just in the nick of time we made it to the City Office to refund our tickets.

Both of us were immensely unhappy and uncomfortable. We lost all taste for food and sleep. We felt uneasy at home and outside. I did not feel like talking to anybody. We were not going to ask anything from Baba. Even then why did He prevent us?

A long week passed after 6 September. On their return, the Hariharans were taken aback to see us as we were expected to be with Baba. That evening we unloaded our minds' burden on them. Hariharan said, "Look here, why did you prepare to fly and thus spend such a huge amount unnecessarily. Baba never wants that anybody spend uselessly for him. What does it matter if you have not been able to go on that date? You may go a few days later."

22nd September. We embarked on our journey to Baba. We had no respite till the train steamed out. Our coupe was nice and clean. We lighted incense sticks in front of Baba's picture on the front page of a bhajan book and started singing. So Baba was taking us to Him. What a joy! Surprisingly, the conductor came round every hour just to enquire what we required. We were often told, "Place your order for meals and you will get everything." Baba had begun looking after us from the very start of the journey!

Next morning I developed dry cough. I had not brought any medicine. With me once a cough begins it becomes persistent. Both of us were worried. When the conductor was asked he told us that the medicine could have easily been obtained at Vizianagaram if we had mentioned it in the morning. However, necessary arrangements would be made at Rajahmundri. The names of the two medicines were written out. As the train started, a man came running and dropped the medicine through the window. We could not even give the man a tip. The medicine received would serve for the day. My husband assured me that medicine would be available next morning in Madras. We spent the night safely.

Next morning we reached Madras. A friend of Roy was at the station to receive us. When the friend came to know about the medicine we required, he told us that it would not be available so early in the morning. Shops generally opened at 9 a.m. Yet, Roy sent the friend's driver just to find out if the medicine could be available. Sahib Singh's shop was near the Madras station. The driver reached just at the moment when the shopman had got in for some work and would leave after finishing it. I got the medicine! Isn't this Baba's grace?

After a two hour break journey at Madras we set out for Bangalore. From Bangalore we had to undertake a 110 mile car journey.

The driver knew a little Hindi and English. Only the name Penukonda was known to us but nothing else on the way. We only knew the distance was about 110 miles and a pucca road led to Penukonda but nothing besides.

After crossing about forty miles the driver turned left and took a track over a field. The more my husband told him, "You must have mistaken the road as we have not yet reached Penukonda" the less the driver listened to him. The driver assured us that he knew Sathya Sai Baba to whom the road leads. Suddenly we found a little girl coming, and stopped to ask her. She could not understand our language, but she could pick up the words "Sathya Sai Baba". She signalled us to go back to the pucca road. The taxi turned back and we took the road indicated.

It was past 5 p.m. when we reached Penukonda. Still the kuccha portion of the road remained ahead and we were anxious to reach before evening. We ran through villages, blowing dust all the way. Every moment we felt we would lose the right track, but why should the wrong track be taken when we set out with Baba's name!

At last we arrived, and proceeded to Shanti Bhawan Hotel, where our room was booked. "Is this called a hotel? Single storeyed with mud floors?" my husband said. A pucca building could be seen at the back, but that too looked no better. Our room was a tiny den, and the mattress were made of leaves and were full of dust. Neither door nor window could be bolted. We knew that there was no bath room. On looking round my husband remarked "Are we to stay here? Let's go back tomorrow." My quick reply, "Why do you get impatient? Let's go and have the Holy Darshan."

As we left our room we thought of locking our room but were told, "Nobody steals here. Baba catches hold of the thief at once."

FIRST DARSHAN

Prashanthi Nilayam, the long desired, the long cherished place had been reached.

A stoping pathway led to the Prayer Hall. It was a big hall, as high as a two storeyed building, adorned with pictures of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Jesus, Buddha, Nimai, Shirdi Baba and other saints, sages and Gods. The synthesis of all religions was emphasized. The room was full of incense, and absolutely silent. The sound of a falling pin could be heard. Seating arrangement was excellent, in rows and columns. A late comer could not go ahead.

I had been thinking when I shall see Baba, when suddenly my cough began. According to rules there, one has to walk out if one is coughing. I came out silently to the verandah and thought "O Baba, we came to meet You from a long distance and now I have to walk out." Suddenly I looked up and saw a figure in deep orange robes. The hair covered the head spherically. This is Baba! He came like lightning and vanished. Tears rolled down my cheeks in joy. I came out so I could see Him first!

Baba arrived in the hall soon after and sat on His "throne," a raised dais. On the right hand rest was a bunch of flowers looking like a lotus. Baba put his hand on it. Bhajans were sung and Baba kept time with the music sometimes by moving His hands, or clapping in rhythm and sometimes nodding.

It was a blissful experience to be in the presence of Baba, and words absolutely fail to express it. After the bhajans , Baba stood up. An arati was offered to Him before he left the room.

SECOND DARSHAN

Next morning we arrived at the cemented courtyard of the temple for Baba's morning darshan. The daily routine of the Ashram had started. Cleaning and sweeping was over. Drawings were being sketched with rice powder, haldi, and kumkum. A lady decorated Baba's gate and the entrance of the Bhajan Hall with garlands made of Devadaru leaves. Everybody worked silently. It was such a peaceful atmosphere. There was no anxiety.

We went to Prof. Kasturi to request him for an interview with Baba. We touched the feet of the solemn old man, who, nodding his head, said, "You have come from a distance but interviews are generally closed three weeks before Navarathri." On enquiry about the telegram and postponement of our journey he said, "Baba's Will will be done." My husband entreated him to request Baba. Kasturi said, "I cannot do anything. However, please write your names and mention Calcutta." Immediately my husband wrote to Baba.

We again came to the cemented courtyard. Baba's darshan at 8.30 a.m. was over. Kasturi came out and told us that there was no hope. Still we were sitting. There was nothing for us to do. I thought if I could have just an opportunity to touch Baba's feet.

It was past 9.30 a.m. Suddenly Kasturi came in and informed us, "Baba has called for the Bengali couple and two Gujarati ladies waiting underneath the tree."

We approached with excited hearts. It was a small room. Entering through the door from the verandah there was the model of Prasanti Nilayam on a table on the right. By its side beneath the window Baba's low chair was placed.

Whoever comes to Prasanti Nilayam yearns to enter this room and to come closer to Baba. Both of us took our seat beside Baba's feet. On the right of my husband were three men from Madras and on my left the two Gujarati ladies. I thought to myself "Does He know every detail passing our mind?" Baba was speaking in his mother tongue with those men. From the sprinkling of English and Sanskrit words being used I could make out that conversation was about the duel of the Vaishnavas and Shaivas regarding the reigning deity of Tirupati. Baba said that whoever is Vishnu is also Shiva. Whoever is Gopal is also Pasupati, i.e., one ruling over animality. Control your five senses. First control the tongue, and the other senses will follow suit. God is one and the same—call Him by any name.

Baba looked at my husband and asked him, "When do you return?" I was struck with wonder. The first words which my husband uttered on arrival here had been, "We will go back tomorrow." Were Baba's ears all over? I was extremely anxious to know what my husband would reply. He replied with folded hands, "Baba, we will return when You permit us." Baba said, "That's all right, I shall tell you." Then the conversation began. "Have you come from Calcutta? Do you know Dutta? He is a great devotee of devotion. How is Khera working?"

Now He asked the Madrasee boy about his health and took him in through the adjoining door. On return Baba sat down in front of my husband. He was speaking to the two other gentlemen and raising His right hand moved it a little. All of a sudden a ring came in His hand and he gave it to one of the men to wear. What a miracle! How did He get the measurement? I thought, "Baba please grant me something which I may share with others. I do not want anything for myself alone." Baba took the two men through the adjoining door. He stood up on his return, and we too stood up. My husband began weeping. While coming from Bangalore my husband bought a sandalwood rosary to offer it at Baba's feet. Whenever my husband placed his hand in the pocket Baba shook His head to prevent. My husband placed his head on Baba's feet and placed the rosary on His feet. Touching it with both hands Baba returned it to my husband.

Then Baba came in front of me. This was a new experience. He asked me, "Mother, are you very weak?" I said, "I do not think so." He said, "Yes, I know you are weak. You have no child, but you will have one." By the movement of His hands He expressed the word "child". He gave me and my husband vibhuti. We bowed down our heads to the ground to pay our best respects. I had my right hand full of vibhuti inside the palm with the hope of distributing it to others.

Baba opened the door and we all came out—as if from the inner to the outer world. Where were we so long? How did time pass? What an intense peace! No language could express this feeling. I felt as if I were floating in space. We had received His blessing; what a joy!

Next day after the morning functions we came to Kasturi's house. From the verandah we were looking at Baba's picture arranged inside the room. Kasturi called us in. No sooner had we crossed the threshold, that the garland on Baba's picture was divided into two halves.My husband said, "How could the garland get torn at the bottom?" Kasturi said, "Baba has just come to this room with you. Here the people believe the sign of Baba's arrival is indicated by the tear of the garland." Kasturi seated us in the room, and we began talking about Baba.

After the mid-day Bhajan we came out to have Baba's darshan. It was about 12-30 p.m. The sun was severely hot. All the ladies stood in the acute heat. Baba came to the verandah and while looking at the sun placed His hand on the head and said, "It's too hot to bear, you may please move under the shade of the tree." From that day onwards ladies were asked not to stand in the sun.

We did not know that the elephant Sai Gita garlands Baba every evening. Sai Gita was going round. Coming near the Shiva linga it knelt down, saluted with its trunk, heaved deep sighs thrice. After going round thrice it went to the big well to get ready to garland Baba after taking a bath.

Baba came out of His room. His gait was indeed very graceful. Ladies sat on either side of the approach to the elephant. Some had fruits, others vibhuti, or a picture or letter. Baba went on touching vibhuti in some hands, autographing the pictures; taking letters from people and receiving fruits to give to the elephant. Some were unlucky to be evaded.

The elephant had caught hold of a stick with its trunk and a garland was hanging on it. As Baba came near, Sai Gita lifted its trunk to garland Him. He fed the elephant with fruits and came forward. Was Baba walking over the ground? Why were His footprints not visible? Nor could dust be seen in his feet. He stood in front of me. I touched His feet with both my hands and paid my deepest respects.

After the darshan at night when we returned to our room we found some people had arrived in the two adjoining rooms. An old man named Kamath introduced himself as coming from Mangalore. He had with him his wife, eldest son, daughter-in-law, daughter, and grand children. The family was indeed fortunate to enjoy Baba's grace. When he came the first time with his son, who had failed in his examination, Baba asked him to get up at 6 a.m. and study for a couple of hours. At 6 a.m. a knock was heard at his door but no one could be found. Yet everyone in the house heard the sound. Apparently Baba not only ordered but also took care to wake him up.

Another incident. The youngest son was carelessly crossing a road, when from the opposite direction a truck came at a terrific speed. Shouting "Sai Ram" he jumped and fell down at a distance. Miraculously he was not hurt anywhere.

Another night passed. On Friday, 26 September, my husband was anxious to inform our friends in Bangalore the change in programme.

My husband wrote a letter to Baba seeking his permission to leave and requested Kasturi to deliver it. Kasturi returned from Baba's room and said, "Baba was cross with me why I was in a hurry as they had come to stay for five days." None except ourselves knew about our stay for five nights. I have not the least doubt that Baba knows whatever passes our minds.

We spent the fourth night. We followed the same routine as earlier. After the 8.30 a.m. darshan we were sitting in the cemented courtyard. Baba came out repeatedly on the first floor verandah without any reason. As soon as we raised our eyes He entered the room. Nobody else could see Him as we did not find any stir amongst them. Baba was playing hide and seek with us.

We were sitting outside during the day-Bhajan. We would not be able to return the next day nor the day after if we could not send the information to Bangalore on that day.The darshan during arati was over. Baba came to grant darshan at 12-30 p.m. He looked at my husband from the first floor and asked, "What's it? Do you want to go? When will you go?" He replied, "Tomorrow morning." Baba said, "All right, you may go."

Today is the last day of the stay. From His place we would have to go to His world outside for our daily duties. Our stay here would be worthwhile if we could carry with us the peace and bliss of this place. While living in the city could we have dreamt of living in this fashion? But we did not feel the least inconvenience here. Never had we such peace elsewhere.

The fifth night at the sacred pilgrimage passed. The time to leave came. Both of us wept, I as if I were leaving the home of my parents. We were eager to go to Halgappa, a great recepient of Baba's grace.

We reached Bangalore. A taxi was fixed up for going to Mysore at 2 p.m. Even if we could not go round. At a little way off stood the second bridge over the Kaveri. A pathway sloped down by the side. A signboard in English indicated, "Shri Sathya Sai Kripa." This was certainly the place. We alighted, and on enquiring came to know that Halgappa's room was locked up. The driver and the two boys accompanied us in curiosity. What did it matter if the room was locked? Kasturi told us that the feet were placed on the side of the river. We went down the steps, touched the water of the Kaveri, and saw Baba's two Feet placed inside a glass kiosk on a dias.

A grey-haired gentleman came up. He was bearded and wore a cloth folded double up to the knee. He took out the glass case. "Look, there is scented oil on all sides." We took out a little and rubbed it on our two palms. Vibhuti lay on the feet. "You may take it all, it will fill up again." He was Halgappa. He asked us where we came from and how we found the place. He listened to our reply and with folded hands took Sai Baba's name. He called us to his cottage.

It was a room with a tin roof and a door. There were pictures of gods and goddesses on all sides. Nothing except the faces could be seen. Everything else was covered with vibhuti and kumkum. Only Baba's red robed picture was clean. Some inscription was noticed on it. With this picture he went to Baba to fetch His autograph, but without a word Baba turned him back. Still he got the picture framed. The inscription appeared written with vibhuti. His glory be thanked. I was overwhelmed. That was my first sight of Baba's miracle. He gave us several packets of vibhuti and kumkum. Still there was a greater surprise awaiting us. He brought a steel utensil in which there was a locket in a big spoon. The pot was full of a white watery substance. He gave us a little to taste. How sweetly scented it was.

He took out the locket from the spoon, shook the spoon and placed the locket again. Nectar flowed down of itself. It was coming out all the time and filled the pot. We wanted to take it for our friends and relatives. We had neither a flask nor a bottle with us. Halgappa said, "I don't think I have a bottle with me, however let me see what I can do." He went somewhere close by and fetched a medicine bottle not very small. He said, "Possibly it was reserved for you." He washed the bottle in Kaveri water and kindly gave us the bottle filled with nectar.

We had to leave the room soon. The time at our disposal was short.

THIRD DARSHAN

The temple courtyard. We looked round the carefully nurtured trees and flower garden to see if any known face could be found. My husband was sitting in the portico and I was in the courtyard.

Baba came. He waved to my husband. He looked further thinned down this time. He was moving to and fro and looking after the arrangements for Navaratri.

A little while later Baba came out. He looked this side and that and came in front of me and said, "I have called not only Bengalees but all those who have come from Calcutta." He picked out ladies from the group, but asked an old lady to stand out. He also picked up some men. Only my husband and an elderly gentleman were left.

We entered the small room. Except for a new picture of Baba everything else was just the same. A group of Sardarjis had come from Punjab. He called them along with their families. The small room was fully packed.

The lady whom Baba met yesterday spoke in Bengali, "Baba, my husband is outside; may I call him in?" Baba asked, "What do you say?" Somebody translated the version in English. Baba opened the door and went out. His eyes fell first on my husband. "Why are you sitting out? Come in." Then He called the husband of the lady.

On entry into the room, He laughed and uttered, "Hus-band?" "Is it bend?" With the movement of His hand He showed lowering bend posture. I said, "It is not 'bend', but 'band'." He humourously said, "Keep silent"—not of course in an angry mood. "What do you call husband in Bengali?" My husband replied, "Swami."

He told the lady, "Mother, your legs are aching too much, after a long time you have sat down here. It will be all right." On the movement of His hand a rudraksha bead materialized. He placed it on the lady's hand and advised her, "Every morning please wash it with three spoons of water and drink it." My husband explained the advice to the lady in Bengali. Now Baba asked the name of the lady's husband. "Sital Choudhary." Baba couldn't follow it, so He asked, "What do you say?" In an English type of pronunciation my husband said, "Shital Chowdhury." Baba asked, "What do you mean by 'Shital'." Some said "cold," some "quiet." Baba said, "Cool," What a beautiful word," and began singing: "*Chalomana Ganga Jamuna teer.*"

Let my mind go to the bank of the
Ganges and the Yamuna
Clear water of the Ganges and the Yamuna

Would cool down the body.

He sang in a mild tone and it was the sweetest sound I ever heard.

Then He asked, "What is bhakti?" My husband replied, "Devotion."

"It's only a translation," He said, "but what does it mean?"

Someone said, sraddha, respect. "No," He answered, "it is not sraddha, respect. Distance is signified in sraddha—which is not in bhakti. If you have sraddha, interest is created but if you have bhakti, peace and stability will come. Bhakti means love." Written in big letters on the stone slab outside Baba's window, were these lines:

Start the day with Love
Fill the day with Love
Spend the day with Love
End the Day with Love

Baba repeated those lines.

"Love means prema, a not the worldly or earthly love, but it is love for God, loving God."

He asked a Punjabi boy his name. He replied "Tejender." "What a beautiful name Tejendra. Tej means light. Well, what is your wife's name?" The boy was unmarried. Baba was laughing, "You are not married? You will, your wife will come. After marriage Tejendra goes with his wife to the seashore for a walk. Suddenly he finds a thorn on the way. 'Oh, it might hurt my wife's foot.' Tejendra's heart almost breaks. He catches hold of his wife's hand and takes her aside.

"After six months Tejendra goes again that way with his wife. He finds the thorn again. But now he did help her to avoid it but warns her not to go that way.

"After another six months the two of them go again that way.

Again the thorn is noticed. Now he says, 'Look at the path as you walk.'

"After another six months both of them are walking but he does not take care of his wife. As soon as the thorn pierces the wife's foot, Tejender shouts, 'Haven't you eyes?"

"The same path, the same Tejender, the same wife and thorn. There was only a change of time, which brought the change in love. So this is not love. Love is unchangeable.

"And the sympathy for the wife? Did she not suffer before her marriage with you. But you did not suffer then? Now you feel for her because she is your wife. 'My' means selfish. Do not love in exchange for return. Selfless love is love for God. You have to forsake selfishness. Instead of worshipping Vasudeva (world), worship Vaasudeva (God). How to do it? The first thing is to love all."

'He contined, "Doubt arises in the mind. Some one has ill-treated me, why should I love him? Do not try to judge what he has done, you will lose your peace of mind in that way. Always play your part well, and remember God."

My husband said, "I remember You always." Baba said, "No, you don't, you utter only the name but you don't think of Me. Whatever you do, always remember, it is God's work. The first step towards that direction is 'self-confidence'. Have confidence that you are a part and parcel of God. This confidence will give you contentment: self-contentment is the second step. As soon as you know God is in you, you have contentment. The third step is self-sacrifice. If the mind is contented, sacrifice will come of itself. Self-realization is the last step. This is the most difficult of all. 'I am Brahman', a knowledge of Brahman means knowledge of the Reality."

Baba spoke to a girl, "You are very self-minded, you do not listen to your parents. The First step to devotion is devotion to parents. Matredevorbhava, Pitredevorbhava, Acharyya devorbhava, Atithi devorbhava—Be Thou Mother, Be Thou Father, Be Thou the Teacher, Be Thou the Guest." For want of this basic knowledge, there is unrest in the country, dissatisfaction in the world.

As soon as Baba was silent, my husband said, "Baba we have come to You. Please permit us to offer our pranam to you on 14 September, my birthday."

Baba said, "Whose birthday is it? Birthday of the body. But you are not the body. You are amar, immortal." My husband said, "Baba, why do we then celebrate 23 November as Your birthday?" I was amazed at Roy's question. Was this a conversation between father and son or between two friends?

Baba said, "You do not celebrate my birthday. But you celebrate the work done by Me. The very day when you do some noble work is your birthday."

An old Sardarji asked for a rosary (japamala) from Baba. "Why do you want a rosary? You will have the incantation (japa)? But why with a rosary? It helps you to incantate a hundred and eight times. You may incantate in your mind infinite times. Can you tell Me why it is done a hundred and eight times? Why not hundred and seven or hundred and nine? Listen, there are twelve suns and nine paramatmas. So 12×9=108."

He raised His right hand and said, "This is the hand. This represents you. The little finger, ring finger, and middle finger, these represent the three virtues. The forefinger represents the soul, atma, and the thumb the greater soul, paramatma. You cannot do anything without the thumb. This is the most important finger. If you bring together the thumb and the forefinger , you can do anything. Join together the soul and the greater soul."

He showed us how to incantate with the hand. There are three parts in each finger. With the help of the thumb count the parts of the other four fingers. Then you have 4×3=12. Keep the count with the left hand. Three virtues are represented in three fingers, i.e., 3×3=9. After counting 12 times keep the count with the left hand. Then you have 12×9=108. He explained to us the method of incanting with Ram Nam.

"The greater Universal Soul guides your soul and also three virtues. Incantate as much as you like. Go on incanting whenever you are free. There is a possibility of abusing incantation with a rosary in hand.

"When will you go?" He asked. Sardarji replied, "Baba, when you wish me to." "This is your own house. I do not ask anybody to come nor anyone to go. Come over whenever you like, go as you may please," He said.

Baba got up and called the old Sardarji to go in. He wished to be accompanied by his wife. "Yes, yes, your duniya (world) will also go with you." Baba turned to the others and said, "My heart is always cheerful, so I make jokes with you." Baba was taking, in pairs—husband and wife, mother and daughter or husband, wife and child. He called my husband last of all. Looking at me He said, "Why are you waiting? Come along."

We did not know where He was taking us through the adjoining door. We were curious. Just behind a curtain steps went up. My husband was standing on the first step and I stood near him. Baba came and stood before us. There was barely a distance of a foot or so. We were speaking at such close proximity but there was neither fear nor any embarrassment. I felt rather uncomfortable at the first visit but it was so easy and comfortable this time.

Pointing to my husband Baba told me, "He has been anxious to come to Me for a long time. He has come after all these days. His health was very bad. He took too much medicine, he discontinued for some time but has taken to it again. He has not to take any medicine. I shall give it. He is very restless, is he not, mother? He does not sit quietly for a moment at home. He is always restless. He thinks of the future only. What will happen? He thinks of his relations. Don't worry. He will live long."

I listened with surprise. In a few words Baba disclosed everything about Roy. Nothing is unknown to Him. I was spellbound and could not reply, but only nodded my head to indicate my full agreement.

He kept His right hand over my head—blessings of all round welfare with His protecting hand. He said, "You have pure devotion. Why do you think so much? Why do you make your mind heavy with anxiety? Give all your thoughts to me."

My husband started weeping as Baba began to speak. Sitting on the step he was lost in tears. He asked only one question to which Baba gave a reply. Baba raised him with His both hands. He blessed him. "You will be all right." He gave vibhuti which removes all disease, all suffering. Both of us fell at His feet and made our pranams.

14th September, Roy's birthday. Every year this day begins by remembering father and mother. Today we were with Baba. On the first day He said, "The birthday refers to that of the body." But this time the mind too was born along with the body.

On Baba's birthday celebration people came from all over. But we have come on my husband's birthday.

We were sitting in front of the temple waiting for Baba's arrival. We looked at the window on the first floor to catch a glance of Him. Foreigners were repainting the writing on the stone slabs. A little more space round the cemented courtyard was being paved with stone. Drawings were being sketched. The elephant was going for the usual round.

Coming out of the room, Baba stood just in front of my husband. Raising his costume he put forward His feet. My husband clasped them with both hands and laid down his head on them to offer pranams. As soon as the head was raised, blessings with vibhuti were granted and He pleasantly asked, "Are you happy now?"

The birth was really worth it. Truly he had a new birth today.

My husband asked, "May we leave tomorrow?" He replied, "All right, you may go."

Tears of joy closed both our eyes, for we had received Him in our hearts.

Before leaving we went to offer our pranam to Eswaramma (Baba's mother). There was no exchange of words. She gazed at us with pleasant smiles and we offered pranam with a happy heart.

We were sitting outside. Boys were working on the hill in front of us. They rolled down big stone slabs from the top, possibly for constructing roads.

My husband was not in his usual seat on the cemented portion but squatted on the dusty road, by the side of the Lotus circle. He was thinking, "Baba, You have been testing me all these days. Firstly You did not permit us to come; next You made us afraid of taking the wrong direction; on the second visit You put in the hurdles of rain and storm. Now You have brought us here after my illness. Now it is my turn to test if I can attract You. I yearned to offer pranam to Your lotus feet on my birthday. You have kindly granted us the opportunity to pay our deepest respects every day on this visit. You have kindly listened to my song. We are going today. We want to bow down at Your feet in warmest regards today."

He sketched a lotus, drawing lines on the dust. On each petal he set a letter and thus inscribed S AI B A B A and a bigger circle outside the lotus. He thought "Baba, now you will have to come inside the boundary drawn. I would like to offer pranam to You, while standing on the Lotus."

Today Baba did not go towards the portico. He went towards the tin shed passing in front of the ladies. Coming round, Baba was just in front of my husband, who was then guarding the outer circle with both his hands. Baba pointed out with His finger and asked, "Eh! Look here, what is that?" My husband's eyes filled with tears. Baba then came and stood on the lotus. "With one pranam my Lord, with one pranam let my body, mind, and soul lay down on Your feet." Granting blessings and vibhuti, Baba asked, "When do you start?" Roy answered, "Just now,"—offered another pranam and washed Baba's feet with his tears.

27. THE MIRACULOUS MESSAGES OF CHILD SAI—A Content Analysis

DR SATYA PAL RUHELA

In this article we are presenting another very interesting and miraculous dimension of Sai Baba's leela (mysterious creations) which would be of great interest and use to Sai devotees and a great challenge to all physical and social scientists and non-believers in God.

There is a family living in H-9, Kailash Colony, New Delhi. It consists of Mr R.P. Gupta, his wife Pashi, son Pappu (age 17 years), and four daughters: Kiran (14), Suman (12), Nina (Archana, 10), and Hibbo (Dwipali, 6). They have known Sai Baba and have come under the umbrella of His Grace from February 1974. Baba's Graces on this family have been in many forms like the mysterious appearance of vibhuti, vermillion, coloured powders, white telcum powder, honey, Ganges water, amrit (sweetened elixir), Baba's Hair, white sugar crystals, fried salted pulse grains, unhusked seeds of watermelon (eatable), turmeric powder (haldi), rice grains etc, and, above all, written messages from Baba on chits of paper.

It is not only very solemnly believed by the members of this family, but it will be clear to anyone who seriously attempts to unravel the mystery of this great phenomenon, that these written messages, appearing instantly as soon as any question or doubt is raised in the minds of the members of the family, are sent by Sai Baba who lives in their house as a Child Sai (Bal Sai), to amuse, encourage, love, instruct and protect all the members of the family, particularly the third daughter Nina (Archana is her school name).

Nina, a child of ten, and her younger sister Hibbo, who is six have made a small house for "Bade Baba" (Shri Sathya Sai Baba —the Elder Baba) and "Chote Baba" (Younger Baba) or "Motumal," The Fatty, as Sai Baba jokingly calls Lord Ganesh. Mythologically, Ganesh is the son of Lord Shiva and Parvati and is portrayed as a fat one with the head of an elephant and the body of a man, and fond of sweets. Sai Baba has declared that He is the Incarnation of Shiva and Shakti in their combined form, so Ganesh may well be treated as His son.

This house is just like a small doll's house, made of an upturned wooden stool with cloth curtains hanging on it. They have placed two rubber toys—one a hare which Nina and Hibbo call Bade Baba and the other is a monkey which they call Chote Baba or Motumal Ji. They have placed small almunium toy utensils and other things to play with.

Beside this, that room has been turned into Baba's room. A cot with bedding is kept there permanently for Baba to lie on. The two toys of Bade and Chote Babas are often seen jumping, fighting, placed upside down or hidden here and there,which show that like dolls Sai Baba and Ganesh Ji are up to all sorts of pranks in order to amuse Nina, Hibbo, and the others. Sai Baba has on several occasions accepted the food offered to Him (*"bhog lagaye hai"*) by eating a bit of a chapati and some vegetable, or some other food as soon as it was served to Him on the table. Invisibly Baba does all this.

More than two hundred written chits have appeared miraculously in the house. Due to Baba's Grace, it has been possible for me to build a rapport with this family, to have tape recorded interviews with all the members and also to acquire about two hundred chits as mentioned above for the purpose of their content analysis for this paper.

THE BACKGROUND

R.P. Gupta worked as a senior officer in a British Bank, the National and Grindlays Bank, New Delhi, till 1971, getting a handsome salary of around Rs 3,000 per month. As a conscientious person he was very concerned when he discovered that the Bank was doing a huge tax evasion and was mercilessly exploiting the country. When he formed an association of officers in the Bank he was removed from service. After making several representations and appeals to the Bank authorities he was compelled to send as many as nine letters to the Income Tax Department disclosing that the Bank had during the last several years evaded payment of income tax to the tune of several crores of rupees (about 70 crores). As retaliation, the Bank has not yet paid monetary benefits like gratuity etc to him so far.

This led to two situations. The economic condition of Mr Gupta totally collapsed, and he found it extremely difficult to feed his large family. Even today, it is so. He joined a private company on Rs 600 per month for a few months, and is again facing unemployment. On the other hand, his letters to the Income Tax Department and then to the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament, led to the starting of a number of investigations against that Bank, and the realization of millions of rupees as tax to the Government of India. The Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament has in its 176th Report very exhaustively covered the story of this exploitation and tax evasion by the Bank. The Government of India have already paid Rs 25,000 as interim reward to Mr Gupta for his disclosures about the Bank's activities. He has, in the meanwhile, written and published on his own, *Curbs Versus Influence: A Study of National and Grindlays Bank Limited and of their 110 years of Exploitation in Asia and Africa* (1974).

Due to unemployment, litigation and endless correspondence with the Bank, plus the large family, and house rent, Mr Gupta's financial position worsened and they were half-starved. The sudden misfortune had affected the children's health and swelled borrowings. While passing their days in such great adversity and poverty, they miraculously happened to slip into the fold of Sai Baba.

Mr Gupta himself narrates how it all started.

"Mr S.B. Singh met me for the first time in December 1973. He needed my guidance on how he could take a loan from any bank to start a small business as his own factory had been closed due to losses. He came to my house with our family priest who lived near Singh's family when we talked about each other's misfortune. Mr Singh showed me his ring on which was fixed the enamelled portrait of Shri Sathya Sai Baba. He said, "Gupta Ji, this is the portrait of the God who lives and moves among man today. Worship him, surrender everything to Him, for everything is in His Hands only. I have read a wonderful book about Him recently, *Sai Baba: Man of Miracles*, written by an Australian, Howard Murphet."

"I told Mr Singh, 'God lives in every heart, and one cannot escape the penalty for wrongs done in the past. If one is true one must accept miseries as blessings in disguise and remain content," I did not take any serious note of Singh's suggestion. On 9 February 1975, Mr Singh again came to my house and informed us with great excitement and joy that honey and vibhuti had appeared on the picture of Sai Baba in his house. I and my wife were astonished to hear this. He informed us that he had brought to his house a gramophone record on which was recorded a full discourse by Baba about His advent and the purpose thereof, and His declaration that He is the Incarnation of God. (The text of His discourse appears under Chapter I of this book under the head "Why I incarnate.")

"Next day we all went to his house. It was so elevating that I asked for it to be played again. Immediately I developed the conviction that Baba is a Dev Shakti (Godly Power). Then all the members of my family went to attend Sai Bhajan in Raghunath Temple in Amar Colony. The Bhajan was conducted in such an orderly and peaceful manner that it made one forget all.

"I went to Singh's house again and had the record (taped discourse) played to me for the third time. It was very soothing. I had purchased the picture of Baba's Lotus Feet, got it framed and brought it to my house. From that day, things have started taking a turn for the better; solutions to our problems started emerging. I had also brought a copy of Baba's *Bhajanavali* (Book of Baba's Songs), but we had no knowledge about the method of worshipping or praying to Him. During winter nights, my wife, children, and I used to sit in our beds covered under quilts and sing Baba's devotional songs. The miracles of Baba started occurring in our house in the last week of September 1974."

Mrs Prakash Gupta ("Pashi") informed me as follows:

"One day in the last week of September 1974, Baba miraculously wrote in English with termeric powder, rice, and *roli* (red powder): 'I come, Do not worry.—Sai Baba.'

"One evening when we were eating, first the words 'I Come' appeared and then vanished. Then the words 'Do not' came and disappeared. Then after a few minutes the word 'worry' came and disappeared. After that vibhuti, turmeric powder, and rice appeared on the clothes, handkerchiefs, watches, rings etc of the members of our family and even on those of the visitors to our house. Then written messages started from Baba as Bal Sai. Baba lives here in the form of a child. We have kept a bed for Baba only. Once Baba sent us a chit, 'I have fever. Pull a blanket over Me on My bed.' We did so. A few minutes later we found the blanket moving up and down as if Baba were actually resting under it. Hot air was emerging out of it just as hot breath emerges from the bed of a fever-ridden patient. Baba answered to our children's questions about His temperature and recovery."

Mr and Mrs Gupta narrated a number of incidents to me in which help from friends and relatives in cash or kind was providentially arranged by Baba for them.

Nina, their third daughter who is Baba's favourite, recalled a Baba's mysterious communications through His chits. According to her, Baba informed her that she and one of the most ardent devotees (living in Greater Kailash and running Bal Vikas classes for children of Sai devotees in Delhi) had been sisters in their previous births, bearing the names Shila and Lila respectively. They were Christians. They were very devoted, so Christ gave them His Darshan, with the blessing that they would be again born and have God's grace. She also said that Baba wrote His replies to her questions instantly whenever she wanted them. She explained how these messages were written by Baba.

"Baba is always present in our house. I experience His presence here all the time. In the beginning we used to ask Him questions before His photograph and He would reply within minutes, but since our questions were many every day, in one of His chits He instructed us to ask questions at fixed hours only. He loves me very much and keeps a watch on me in school as well. We do not see Him, but invisibly His Grace keeps showering on us. Whenever we wish to get a reply from Baba, I place a paper and pen or pencil or piece of chalk on our writing table, reverently put the question to Him, and come out of the room. After a few minutes I enter the room and find Baba's message written on the paper. These messages are dictated by Baba (Sai Baba or Bade Baba) but they are actually written by Ganesh Ji (Chote Baba) for Bade Baba. And since Chote Baba is very naughty, He writes these messages of Bade Baba in an amusing manner, carelessly, writing some words here and some there, drawing cartoons and sketches. Being the dear son of Bade Baba, He plays childish games and pranks all the time, and Bade Baba as Bal Sai also enjoys them."

Nina's sisters Kiran, Suman, and Hibbo supplemented this information by narrating many interesting incidents about these two Gods living and playing in their house.

"Many times Chote Baba gets angry with Sai Baba so He turns Sai Baba's picture towards the wall. In one of Baba's chits, He wrote to our mother, 'Mother, do not turn Motumal Ji's picture. I have given Him punishment for He is very naughty. You do not know how much He is naughty. On another occasion Baba Himself wrote and sent us a chit. Mother, this Motumal Ji is very naughty. He dared to wet My bed. So I took Him to the bathroom with the spoilt bedsheet, and made Him wash it there.' As soon as we received this funny chit, we ran towards our bathroom. Indeed, there were Child Ganesh's little feet and Sai Baba's comparatively larger footprints in water throughout the passage from the bathroom to the room, and the centre of the bedsheet was wet and it bore the marks of being twisted to drain off water." At times, Nina's sisters have seen the lower portion of Baba's red yellow, or orange choga (long garment) in their staircase or behind the closed doors of their rooms.

Nina showed me many interesting chits. She informed me that Baba used to teach her how to play the harmonium. There are a number of incidents revealing how Baba arranged Divine connections in order to shower His Graces on this blessed family, to keep the children unaffected by the misery that had befallen the family.

TRANSCRIPTION OF BABA'S MESSAGES : THE DATA

In this section are presented in English the two hundred chits carrying Sai Baba's messages, which were received in Nina's house, during a period of nine months. Some of them are not very legible, some are misplaced, some carry only "Yes" or "No." Leaving all these, we have a hundred and ninety nine chits and one long list of the participants who were to attend the first *bhajan* at their house, prepared and sent by Baba miraculously days ahead.

Since the members of Nina's family did not keep them systematically day-wise, and had not even put the date of their receipt on each of them, it was a very difficult task to arrange and classify them. However, this has been done, and the serial numbers given to these chits arbitrarily according to the number of chits as could be pasted on one paper. So the page number mentioned below means that of the paper on which we have pasted these messages. The message number is given by us. These messages are, as far as possible, arranged thematically or person-wise. Thus, for instance, messages giving directions to sing certain devotional songs in *bhajan* sessions are pasted on another, those giving stories on another, etc.

THE MESSAGES

Page One

1. A Sketch of Ganesh in red ink with the word "Ganesh" written in Hindi.

2. The word "OM" written in Hindi in pencil.

3. A Shiva Linga drawn in pencil and the words "Shiva Linga" written in Hindi.

4. The word "OM" in Hindi with two smaller similar words on either side on the top.

5. A Swastika mark in blue ink.

6. The word "OM" in Hindi in blue ink.

7. A Swastika mark in blue ink. Marks awarded 10/10 below it.

8. A line sketch showing clouds, a hut, a girl named Suman (written in Hindi), and a bird in blue-black ball point.

9. A cartoon of a boy, and the word "Hello" written in Hindi in blue ink.

10. A cartoon of Nina's mother entitled "Ma" in blue ink.

11. Six small cartoons of heads and the words "One shawl for Me" in Hindi in blue ink.

12. Sketch of a tree and the words, "Small; yesterday film was good." ("*Chotta sa. Kal film achhi thi.*") The reference is to a

Hindi feature film shown on television which Nina and her brother and sisters saw on Sunday evening.

Page Two

13. "Do you think that sister Nina does all this (referring to the writing of the chits carrying Baba's messages). Alright, do not believe. What do I lose? I am nothing. Does Nina go to all others houses and write there also. I have given you much more hence you do not believe. Henceforth I shall write very less." In Hindi in blue black ink. (See its Photo plate)

14. An interesting sketch of "Hanuman Ji ka Park" (God Hanuman's Park), with sketches of an umbrella to sit under, two sliding swings (Phislana jhoola), one back-and-forth swing (aage piche hone wala jhoola), and two cartoons of children's heads. In the cartoon, half are Hanuman's house and many houses of monkeys (*Vaanaron ke bahut se ghar*). The whole sketch is in lead pencil.

15. "Hibbo (Nina's younger sister aged four years) do not go." Received on 24 October 1974. Message in Hindi written in lead pencil.

16. "I shall not reply to anybody else's question."

17. "OM" written six times in Hindi in lead pencil: "*Chin chin wali kursi wali.*" The message refers to Nina's elder sister Kiran, who was playing upon a musical instrument, called the "chin chin" by Baba. She was sitting on a chair while playing upon it. The message is written in Hindi in lead pencil.

Page Three

18. "I will not materialise anything." Written in Hindi in red pencil.

19. "Nina, how do you say that they haven't come; they have come. My friends are going. We say 'Thief,' you say 'Bol, Bol,' I shall give you sugar lump."

20. "Do not worry for Me and for them. I'll tell you (if any-

thing is needed for entertaining my friends). They don't drink (tea)." Nina and her sister had prayed before Baba's picture to inform if they could offer tea to Baba's mysterious and invisible friends. Baba's reply is given in this chit. The message is in blue ink.

21. "I go in haste." Message in Hindi, in pencil. "Do not take it ill." Swastika mark. Message in Hindi in blue ink.

22. "My friends are departing." Message in Hindi.

23. "I am Bhagavan (God). Therefore I let you go." (Mein Bhagavan hoon isliye jane deta hoon). Message in Hindi in lead pencil.

24. "I'll not eat." Message in red pencil.

25. Cartoon of a child, and the message, "Hallo, while studying, you all children, do not look into Nina's notebook." Written in Hindi in blue ball point ink. Received on 2 October 1974.

26. "I am angry with Hibbo." Message in Hindi in blue ball point ink.

27. "You do not weep. This is sufficient. Prem Baba." This message is in Hindi in blue ink addressed to Nina's younger sister Hibbo, aged four, who used to weep often. Baba has signed His name as Prem Sai who would be His next incarnation.

28. "Not now." This is in response to Nina's parents' question as to when they would be called by Baba to Puttaparti.

29. "Hibbo, do not go." Message in Hindi in lead pencil received on 22 October 1974.

30. "Hear from record" (meaning the record of Baba's bhajans). This is in reply to the children's desire that Baba should sing bhajans.

31. "Yes, fasten the balloons. Younger Sai Baba." Message in Hindi in lead pencil, received in response to the children's wish in their hearts to decorate Baba's worship room with coloured balloons.

32. "Hibbo, you don't beat elders. *Ha, Ha.* From Sai Baba." All the words are written in Hindi except "From" in English,

in blue ink.

33. "Motu says I am twenty years old." (Baba jokingly addresses Ganesh Ji as Motu, the Fat One.)

34. "Keep *mouna* (complete silence); do not talk." (Hindi) (Instructions to keep silent during Shiva Ratri night) From *"Ma* (Sai Baba's Mother), *Motu Mal* (Ganesh Ji), *Shirdi Baba* (Elder Baba, i.e. Sathya Sai Baba) Prema Sai Baba, (the future Incarnation of Sai Baba)."

35. Sketch of a girl (Hibbo), and message, "You don't improve by My asking once; Shall (I) have to ask you again and again? Hibbo, why do you weep? I have to write again and again. Don't weep." Message in Hindi in blue ink.

36. "Don't ask me such questions." Reply to a person's question as to when his factory would run well.

Page Five

37. "You wish to see the film then see it; alright see it." Message in Hindi written in blue ball point received on 20 September 1974 in response to the children's prayer in their hearts to Baba to allow them to go to neighbour's house and see a Hindi film on television.

38. "Pappu, you shouldn't scold Nina. *From* Shirdi Baba." Message in Hindi in pencil.

39. "These *parchiyan* (chits) I wrote in Nina's school."

40. "Wake Nina up at 5. Hallo, Suman, Nina, Hallo."

41. "Nina, you don't get afraid. I am with you. Prem Sai Baba."

42. "Nina, you do not speak to anyone, these are dirty children (for Nina's sisters), my daughter." Then a very small sketch of Sai Baba. "(I) will not draw other photo (picture)."

43. "Nina, you shouldn't scold Hibbo during *bhajan. Ha, Ha, From* Shirdi Baba."

44. "Sa Re Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni Sa Ni Dha." (Musical scale) "OM Sai Ram" written in a circle in pencil.

45. "Good" written in pencil in English. Also "Good" written twice in blue ball point but cut by a line across each.

46. "Haven't I told? I will teach you (how to play the harmonium) when the mother's (Nina's mother's) worship ends, i.e. at 11-15."

47. "Nina, you do (sing) '*Hari Hari Narayana Nam Om*' Prem Baba Om." Message in Hindi in blue ball point.

48. "I wrote these chits in Nina's school." In Hindi in pencil.

49. "*Kiran,* you do not play upon chin-chin well. Play upon it well. *From* Sai *Baba.*" The italicized words are in English and the rest in Hindi in blue ink. Message received on 14 October 1974.

50. "On Bal Vikas day, on returning (to your house) study. Baba. Decorate (the room). Here flower and creeper (designs). Paper has been wasted, excuse Me."

51. "I was sitting there (in the Bhajan) with great pleasure. Do not give garland to anybody (outsider)."

52. A page from Nina's daily diary corrected and signed by Sai Baba.

53. "Don't weep. That makes Prem Sai Baba happy."

54. "Kiran you do (sing) *'Gopal Radhey Krishna Govind, Govind Gopal'* Prem Baba." In Hindi in blue ink.

55. "Suman, you sing Bhajan—*"Vahe Guru. . . .*" In Hindi in blue ink.

56. "Suman, you should keep your eyes closed during Bhajan. *From* Prem Sai Baba." All the words are in Hindi except "From" which is in English. On the back of the chit there is another message: "Why, how do you do? Alright, how are things? Hallo. *From* Sai Baba." In blue ink.

Page Seven

57. "Nina, sing the Bhajan—'*Smit, Smit, sunder mukharvinda, Nacho Nandlala, Nandlala.*"

58. "Hibbo, you sing Bhajan—*Gopala, Gopala Nacho.*"

59. "Hibbo, you do (sing)—'*Man Mohan Murli Gopala, Jai Govind Radhey Gopala.*' Prem Baba."

60. "Pita Ji (Nina's father), you sing: *'Bhaj Govindam'.*"

61. *"Sai Ram* (4), *Ram* (8)—From the side of ALL."

62. Pappu (Nina's elder brother), you sing: *'Hai Deen Dayal Sai Rama Ram.'* Prem Baba."

63. "Suman, you do (sing)—'*Guru Deva, Jai Deva'.*"

64. "Suman, you do: '*Kahne ko to youn kahte ho, he Bhagavan,*' Prem Baba."

65. *"Mein teri hun, too mera hai, Mein jeeyun ab tere hi sahare Kon hai mera tere bina."* (I am Your's, You are mine: I now live only on Your support; Excepting You, who else is now mine?)

66. *"Dil main daya udharata Man main prem apara*; *Hame bachao paap se, Karke daya Dayal.* " (You pour kindness in our heart, You have unlimited Love in your Heart, Save us from sins, Take pity on us, O God.")

67. "Ma (Nina's Mother) you sing Bhajan: *'Tum hee data Sai Shanker'* (You are the Giver, O Lord Sai Shanker)."

68. "Suman, you sing: '*Aao Sai Narayan do mujhe darshan*'. (Come Sai God, give me Your holy darshan).—Prem Baba."

69. *Mujh main tujh main hai bhed yahi, Main nar hun, tu Narayan*; *Main hun sansar ke hathon main, Sansar Tumhare hathon main*" Written in Hindi in lead pencil. (This is the difference between me and You—I am man, You are God; I am in the hands of the world, the world is in Your Hands.)

70. "*Jai Jai Shiv Shanker*" In Hindi in lead pencil.

71. "Pappu, you sing: *"Namo Parvati."* In blue ink.

Page Eight

72. "Ask Suman not to talk big." Written in pencil.

73. *"Happy* Birthday *to* your *DADY*. Italicized words are in English. Written in blue ink.

74. "No child should touch (My) photo." In pencil.

75. "Pappy, you rub off the (My) writings on the wall in kitchen.

Thank you." In Hindi in pencil.

76. "Today I shall not take food, there is some reason, don't ask it." In Hindi.

77. "Pappu, you should not do *gudgudi* (tickle) to any body. *Acha*. (Alright). Shirdi Baba."

78. "Ask Pappu to play upon *dholak* (drum) in bhajan in his house only, not in others' houses."

79. "First follow that much then I shall tell more." Written in pencil, received on 18 November 1974.

80. "Now all of you play the game *Ringa Ringa* Roses without powder at 10; Mother (and) Daddy shouldn't play it." In Hindi in blue ink, except the italicized words in English.

81. "Ask Suman to play upon chin chin straight. Hallo, Hi Ho." In Hindi in blue ink.

82. "Do not beat...."

Page Nine

83. "I will not be seen, (but) I will surely come (in bhajan). I will not be seen, I'll come, do it with Daddy. (Sing bhajans with Nina's Daddy.)" Written in Hindi in blue ink.

84. "If any body does not believe (in my chits),then Nina you say, 'You may not believe, (but) we (I) shall believe'. From the side of All of Us."

"I had written all that. This house (family) is that of non-believers. Even after giving (you) so many things, you do not believe. Your Daddy does not believe that I had written that." In blue ink in Hindi.

85. "*Q*. Should I show My Face?

Ans. See in the photo (of Mine)." In Hindi in pencil.

86. "Decorate the room (Baba's room)". In Hindi, in blue ball point pen.

87. "Don't weep, I shall beat, I'm angry. Children will do, not I. Nina's finger-ring is good'. The sentence in the middle is in

blue ball point, the rest of the message is in pencil.

88. "Do not take My Mother's name."

89. "Suman, why don't you let children eat? Don't be too much big."

Page Ten

90. "Today, (I) saw full picture." (Written in Hindi in pencil).

91. "I don't know. I do not go to market so I don't know." Received on 16 October 1974, written in Hindi in pencil.

92. "Shall cover (Nina shall cover herself with blanket. Children said, "We don't play, our Daddy will be angry," then you don't play drama. Tell that *Chote* Baba's (Ganesh ji) Mausi (Mother's sister) is visible with Him. Besides that, I am also visible. Other drama is also seen, tell." Written in Hindi in pencil. On the reverse side, "OM" is written in Hindi and the marks 10/10 given in ink.

93. "I now go to Puttaparthi, and shall return after eating." Written in pencil.

94. "Open it carefully. Do not make haste." This chit together with kum-kum was found while unfolding a calendar wrapped in a rubber band.

95. "No mistake has been committed (by you)."

Page Eleven

96. "Hibbo, today Kiran and Suman teased me very much, I shall not talk with them." Written in Hindi in pencil.

97. "No, no tea now. Yes, they are in my room, do not see my friends for some time."

98. "OM, Sai Baba." In red pencil, in Hindi.

99. "Vibhuti fallen from (My) Photo should be collected (by you)." Swastika drawn in blue ink.

100. "Well, not for me. Put down this cup of cold tea. Can my friends stay here? Yes." In pencil.

Page Twelve

101. "While eating why did you speak? Don't let Sati (Nina's maternal uncle) see proofs." In pencil; received on 24 October 1974.

102. "One day I slipped on powder. I applied Iodex." Received on 24 October 1974.

103. "OM, I don't know; I won't tell. Yes, I am happy." In Hindi, in ink.

104. "Yes, I have said, it is sweetened water (materialized by Me) drink it." In Hindi, in pencil.

105. "Nina is appearing very beautiful." In Hindi, in blue ball point. Received on 17 October 1974.

106. "Hibbo is appearing beautiful." In Hindi, in blue ball point. Received on 17 October 1974.

Page Thirteen

108. "Whatever you will say to Nina, that you are saying to Me." In blue ball point.

"Put a (hand) fan for me on the cushion." In blue ball point. "Let Nina sister and Hibbo sister play today." In blue ink. "I'll explain, I'll explain, she is my daughter." "This is a joke." In Hindi, in pencil. "Today My heart is not for writing any thing." In pencil.

109. "Today there is pain in the full body of Nina. Do not let her go to school and for tuition. If anybody asks (the reason for it), tell that I had forbidden it."

110. "Now onwards I shall not touch your ink. Excuse Me, ink has fallen. I am weeping." In Hindi, in blue ink.

111. "This is Shiva's statue. When Nina went for tuition, I also went with her with my slate. The test did not take place today. I did many sums." In Hindi, in blue ink.

112. "Today I shall play a fictitious drama with *Chote* Gaddy." In pencil.

113. "Remove it Kiran." In blue black sign pen.

114. "I'll not write. I've told you." In pencil.

115. "I am not angry."

116. "Diwali Greetings." Sketch of a burning candle in pencil.

Page Fourteen

117. "Pappu, you don't go for *Kirtan;* I have to study." In pencil.

118. "My Hair have appeared on rack." Written in Hindi in pencil. Received on 7 October 1974. On the reverse side: "Tear the chits. Remove all these written things."

119. "Bharti (Nina's friend), you should not be angry that vibhuti has not appeared in your house. *From* Prem Sai. Written in Hindi, except the word "From" which is in English. Written in pencil.

120. "Mummi, you take rest for one hour. (Ha Ha) *From* Shirdi Baba." In Hindi, in blue ink.

121. "Daddy, while doing Kirtan, you should not search for *Bhajans*. (*Ha Ha*) *From* Eswaramma." In Hindi except the word "From" which is in English, written in blue ink.

122. "Daddy, you should not get irritated with Mummy." In Hindi written in pencil. Received on 17 October 1974.

123. "In the evening, study from 5 to 7. Do not get up. Do not see film. I've wasted paper, excuse Me. *With* bessings *From* Sathya *Sai Baba : From* Shirdi *Baba,"* Italicized words are in English; written in ink.

124. "Tell Kiran not to talk ill of others, of Daddy, Mother. I'll not write." In Hindi, in blue ball point.

125. "Daddy do not take ill of all these things. *From* Prem Sai Baba." In Hindi, in pencil.

Page Fifteen

126. "Ask Kiran not to sleep after getting up in morning. *Ho Ho. From* the side of All," In Hindi, except the word "From." in pencil.

127. "Ask Bharti to do *Suprabhatam* (morning prayer to Sai Baba) on getting up in the morning." In Hindi, in blue ball point.

128. "Nobody is a fool." In Hindi, in blue ink.

129. "You fill false entries in diary." In blue-black sign pen. In Hindi, except the word "Diary" which is in English.

130. "Pappu, today you have not obeyed Me. Why did you beat her (younger sister)?" In Hindi, in blue-black sign pen. Received on 18 October, 1974.

131. "Go to bed at 9 in night." In Hindi, in blue ball point. Received on 11 October 1974.

132. "Pappu, all will go." In blue ball point, in Hindi.

133. "Pappu, you shouldn't beat children *Ha. From* Eswaramma." In Hindi, except the word "From" in blue ink.

134. Reply to Pappu's question : What time should we wake up?) "4." In blue ball point.

Page Sixteen

135. "I (Ganesh ji) have to eat *ice cream*? I'll take five toffies." In Hindi.

136. "Nina, you take food after taking bath in cold water."

Page Seventeen

137. "Birthday (Today). I (Ganesh) am 6 years old." "Be happy today, *Ha Ha* Suman." "Elder Daddy will bring double bed sheet for me." Written in Hindi in pencil.

138. "Open the files." In Hindi, in pencil.

140. "I will not give. I do not give (it) at anybody's house. Sister Sai Ram." In Hindi, in pencil.

141. "I got 28 marks in the test. I did counting in Hibbo's class. You must be knowing the method of writing story. I don't write (that). I inform you the timings to ask Me questions; 2.30, 3.00, 3.30, 4.00, 5.00, then 7, then that's all. As I have told you these timings now you ask me question at 2.30." In Hindi, in pencil.

142. "Today I will not reply to any question, even though you

may apologise." In Hindi, in pencil.

Page Eighteen

143. "Why are you asking this?" In Hindi. Rest of the chit is illegible.

144. A pencil sketch of a girl and some candles.

145. "Whatever is cut (crossed) is correct." In Hindi, in pencil.

146. A sign pen sketch of snake.

147. "Mr and Mrs B. are very good."

Page Nineteen

148. "Don't show." In Hindi, in pencil.

149. "From 2.30 to 4 we ("I" in Hindi) will go out for picnic and will return at 4. Then open the door at 4. We shall not reply any question till 4." In pencil, in Hindi.

150. "In your house I can not take food for many days, but you should keep (offer) food (to me), but do not take it ill." In Hindi, in pencil.

151. "Today I have drank water from the earthern pot,do not take it ill." In Hindi, in pencil.

152. "Do not keep copy." In Hindi, in pencil. (Somebody had kept a notebook for Baba to bless.)

153. "Somewhere somebody has died, so I will not take food for two days." In Hindi, in pencil.

154. "Do not keep (offer) anything. Today I shall not eat food. The first sentence is in pencil, the second in red ink.

155. "Offer (me) food in day, not in night." In pencil, in Hindi.

Page Twenty

156. "(I) am getting afraid, yes." In Hindi, in pencil.

157. "When I materialized Shiva Linga (at Puttaparthi at the occasion of Shiva Ratri) I got fever." In Hindi, in blue ink.

158. "Fix up this creeper." In Hindi, in red pencil.

159. "Suman, do not scold Nina." In Hindi, in pencil.

160. "Keep (offer) cold tea. It is 102 (degrees temperature)." In Hindi, in red pencil.

161. "Yes, I have recovered. It is 100 (degrees temperature). Keep tea." In Hindi, in red pencil.

162. "Nina, the ant seen by you, which was changing its colour was I." In Hindi, in pencil.

163. "For Nina." In Hindi, in pencil.

164. "Eswaramma, Sai Baba, Shirdi Baba, Prem Sai Baba."

Page Twenty-one

165. "Today, the Bhajan was not good, nobody's heart was for doing it." In Hindi, in pencil.

166. "Nina shall go to attend Ball Vikas Day on Friday, only today she can go." In Hindi, in red ink.

167. "Do not do Kirtan (today). I am giving you prashad (food-gift) for Dashera." In Hindi, in red pencil.

168. "Do not pick up (vibhuti) fallen on ground" In Hindi, in blue ball point. Received on 4 October 1974.

169. "Do not keep ((food) now." In Hindi, in pencil. Received on 21 October 1974.

170. "Nina, see it later on." In Hindi, in pencil.

171. "I'll not write (now)." In Hindi, in the blue ball point. Received on 4 October 1974.

172. "(I) Shall not tell." In Hindi, in pencil. Received on 11 October, 1974.

173. "Clean other photos."

"Do not ask any question in the middle." "Wake up brother Pappu." In Hindi, in pencil.

174. "Kiran, don't get irritated." In Hindi, in pencil.

Page Twenty-two

175. "Om Namah Shivaya, Om Namah Shivaya, Om; Baba has not written this." In Hindi, in blue-black ball point.

176. "Mother you were thinking that in your *Bhajan,* the

dholak (drum) was not beating well, but then I was beating it." The remainder of the note is illegible. "You spread your bed on ground, then how shall I sleep on cot. I shall also sleep on ground with my friends."

177. (Riddle) "White eggs on green green grass. (Answer: dew) (Riddle) "Onething which goes from tree to tree." (Answer: tree) (Riddle) "Egg in yellow water." (Answer: curry).

Page Twenty-Three

178. "When Younger Daddy comes, do you know what we shall do? Putting on (glass) bangles Nina will enter my quilt and hide her face." In Hindi, in pencil. The message is crossed in pencil, and is initialled by Baba in blue ink.

179. "Don't go. Don't show. Hibbo shall go. (I) shall get angry." In Hindi, in pencil. Received on 10 October 1974

180. *"Kiran*, we are (I am) returning after visiting *Delhi*, don't tell." In Hindi. The words underlined in the sentence are in English.

181. "(I) shall not be tired. Do not be fashionable. I am not angry." On the reverse side: "Do not take *Vibhuti*". In Hindi, in pencil.

182. Let the coins be there." In Hindi, in pencil. Received on 13 October 1974.

Page Twenty-four

183. When powder appeared on Baba's photo Nina commented, "Baba you are hidden in the clouds." Baba responded with a chit saying, "Why should I hide in the clouds. Now my temple looks nice."

184. "(I) do not know, what sort of *Sanathana Sarathi* is?" In Hindi, in pencil.

"Do not teach me." In pencil, in Hindi. (I) do not drink (tea) in night." In pencil, in Hindi. "My friends have come. Eat these fried pulse grain. "I shall not take any more food...

"Incomplete message in red pencil, in Hindi.

185. "Offer me one cup of milk and two toasts in the morning. Offer me food in the evening."

186. "These (Lollypops) are of 30 np. These are for Nina and Hibbo."

Page Twenty-five

187. "From tomorrow, Mira bring one orange, not guava." "Today it was a very good *bhajan*. I am happy." In Hindi, in red pencil.

Page Twenty-Six

188. *"Riddles.* There is one such thing which on rubbing give spark. (Answer: Stone).

There is one such thing which burns into ash whatever it falls on." (Answer: Lightening). There is a thing which moves itself. (Answer : Legs). There is a thing which on touching you stick to. (Answer : Electricity pole). That's all."

"To Pitaji (Father)

I request you that you have had happiness (Mr. Gupta had received prize), and (so) you bring flute for children and high heeled chappals for me and Hibbo. It shall be a great kindness of yours. Thanks. Your Biggest God, GANESH, Destroyer of all miseries." The remaining note is illegible. In Hindi in pencil, red pencil, and blue black ball pen.

Page Twenty-seven

189. Story of Crane and Fishs. "Once there lived many fishes in a tank. One day a crane thought of eating all the fishes. He told the fishes, 'Sisters, now a famine is going to take place. I shall take you to another place.' There a crab also lived. The crane took the fishes on a rock and killed and ate up all the fishes one by one. When the crab's turn came and she started taking it (crab) (the crab was clever), the crab "looked towards the rocks

and said, 'there is no water here.' He caught hold of the crane's neck, twisted it and killed her, and went back to its place." Written in Hindi, in pencil.

190. Story of Monkey and Sage. "There lived a monkey and a she-monkey. They had a baby. Once there came a sage. He brought many fruits. The monkey and the she-monkey had gone somewhere. So the monkey's mouth began to water. He begged the sanyasi of some fruits. When he (baby monkey) ate the fruits, he became unconscious and fell down. and died. When both the monkeys (parents) came to know this thing, they thought of taking revenge with the sanyasi. They went to the sanyasi's house and killed him by mixing poison in his milk, and then began to live peacefully. He was (actually) not a sanyasi but a dacoit. The police caught him and gave a lot of prize to the monkeys." (Written in Hindi, in pencil.)

191. "This story I told the rats yesterday. (The Story of the Wolf and Fox). Once a fisherman was carrying a fish caught by him. A fox sat on the way intentionally. Considering her to be dead, the fisherman put her there (in his fishload). The fox started dropping the fish one by one. When all the fish had been thrown down, she also jumped down, and started eating the fish. Just then a wolf on seeing the fish said to himself, 'Why can I not catch the fish? He told her such a trick that he ultimately killed and ate her up. I shall tell you that trick later on." In Hindi, in pencil.

192. "Rat asked, 'Why have you come here? They will kill you.' I made it run away, it has run away." In Hindi, in pencil. Received on 24 October 1974.

Page Twenty-eight

193. "In the day you were saying that Nina had fever. Nina's health is improving very well. I will not tell. You don't want. She'll become thin, you'll see." In Hindi, in pencil.

194. "Don't tell her. No." The first sentence in pencil, and "No" in sign pen." (Received on 16 October 1974.

195. "Not feeling to have it." In red pencil. "Take this photo. It is very good." In Hindi, in pencil.

Page Twenty-nine

196. I will not send you to Prashanti Nilayam." In Hindi.

Page Thirty

197. "In the day only."

Sing *bhajan: "Sai Charnam, Nirmal Hridaya Virajit Charnam."* In Hindi.

Page Thirty-one

198. "Yes, yes, yes...."

"Sorry, sorry, sorry."

Page Thirty-two

199. "Now you eat." One day, the ceiling fan starting moving, and the smell of rubber burning was coming. Baba wrote a chit—"Rubber is burning. Then I will also not teach it (fan)." In Hindi.

200. A long list of devotees who would come to attend the first bhajan at Nina's house in March 1975.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

A close examination of these messages reveals the following points of analysis:

Purposes or Aims

The purposes or aims of writing and sending these messages by Sri Sathya Sai Baba to Nina's family are found to be as follows.

(*i*) To amuse the children in the family, especially Nina and Hibbo who are just eleven and six years of age. The cartoons and haphazard writing and some jokes and stories and riddles given in them indicate it very clearly. To give them joy especially when they are sad and disturbed.

(*ii*) To develop the children of Sai devotees by guiding them as to when they should get up, how and what to sing in the *bhajan* sessions, how they should behave, how they can live peacefully and with joy, and how they should treat their parents, elders, friends, and other Sai devotees.

(*iii*) To give elementary lessons in spirituality, by telling the eternal truths about the existence of the immortal soul, the cycle of birth and death, incarnation, etc. and the need to utter Lord's name constantly in mind.

(*iv*) To develop respect for the great saints and incarnations; thus for examples in the case of this family the names of Christ and Shankaracharya were introduced by Baba to Nina and her brother and sisters.

(*v*) To protect His devotees from accidents or disasters by issuing forewarnings, admonitions etc.

(*vi*) To make them believe in the miraculous nature of the Fatherhood of God, by writing and sending these chits carrying His messages in a mysterious manner, instantly as soon as any question or doubt rises in the devotee's heart. That God is omnipresent and omnipotent is clearly established by such mysterious happenings which should intrigue and challenge all scientists throughout the world. Baba's Divine Teleprinter baffles the minds of the scientists, for Baba transcends all laws of physics.

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Addressees

These messages are generally addressed or related to a particular Divine or great Soul living in the form of a child in the family, who had earned great merits in his or her past life, and for that reason Baba blesses him or her by showering His endless stream of love and peace. It is natural that the parents and siblings of that particularly blessed child (in this case Nina) would also share the happiness arising from these divine happenings.

In this connection, it would be great interest to readers to learn that at Kiran Singh's place*, one of the chits sent by Baba clearly informs us that Baba sends these written messages only in those houses where some great or meritorious soul resides. These chits are meant to protect, guide, and shower happiness on him or her. Kiran Singh's brother Sushil has been indicated by Baba as a blessed soul.

Sender

A close perusal of these chits reveals that the sender's name signed on most of them is either Sai Baba or Shirdi Baba (the previous incarnation of Sai Baba at Shirdi village) or Prem Baba (the next incarnation of Sai Baba would be as Prem Baba who according to Sai Baba would be born after His passing away), and Eswaramma (the late Mother of Sai Baba), or "From the Side of All," i.e. all these four Divine Spirits.) This seems to be show that all Gods are one and the same, different forms made out of the same sugar, as Baba often says.

Medium

There does not seem to be any medium between the Godhead sender of these chits and the receivers or addresses of them. Baba has Himself declared in His Discourses that He addresses or communicates with His devotees directly without using any medium, and this is proved by these chits.

Style

The style of writing is very informal, straight, loving, and conversational. It is just like Baba's personal conversation with His devotees, the same South Indian type of Hindi with broken words or grammatically incorrect sentences insofar as some of the genders and verbs are concerned. The purpose is to have heart-

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to-heart communication, and therefore, the style is aptly informal and intimate. The sentences are very brief, written in different styles and careless handwriting with cartoons, as all children draw. Baba's handwriting on the chits appearing at S.B. Singh's house is very serious, straight, legible, beautiful, and bold, and every chit is signed by Him in English as "Sai Baba". About 1000 such chits have appeared in her house since March 1974.

Contents of the Chits

(*i*) The diagrammatical presentations in some of the chits are that of either Ganeshji, OM, Swastika, Shiva Linga, Hanumanji —all of which are symbols of Godliness for the Hindus. In some chits, we find drawings of clouds, trees, girl's face, umbrella, hut, park etc., and even a full scenery drawn by Baba.

(*ii*) In a number of chits, Baba has established that it is He who writes and sends those chits, not Nina, whom her father suspected of doing in the beginning.

(*iii*) In some of the chits, there are clear instructions regarding the decoration of Baba's room for the bhajans such as, "Fix up the balloons."

(*iv*) In some chits, there are instructions about handling and distribution of vibhuti, for example, when it should be collected and taken, and how it should be distributed to devotees. In the chit which indicates the list of invitees to the bhajan, sent miraculously by Baba days in advance, there is an instruction for that day's bhajan that the vibhuti distributed should be applied to the devotees forehead before the start of the bhajan, whereas at all Sai Bhajans, vibhuti is distributed to the devotees after the bhajan. This was indeed an exceptional instruction from Baba. In one chit there is an instruction that the flower garland put around Baba's pictures or chair in one's house should not be given away to outsiders. Another advice is that one should keep one's eyes closed while singing a bhajan.

(*v*) In some chits, the themes are concerning Baba, e.g. Baba's fever, Baba going out on a picnic for a few hours, Baba visiting Delhi, (other devotees or places in Delhi), Baba's friends having come and Baba feeding them invisibly, Baba being unhappy due to the death of some of His devotees and therefore not in a mood to eat for two days, Baba being Bhagavan (God) etc.

(*vi*) Baba does not like the beating, teasing or maltreatment of children by their elders. Many of these chits very clearly indicate this.

(*vii*) While Baba in His discourses has on a number of times, spoken against the harms of cinema films, He does succumb to his children devotees who very much wish to see the Hindi feature film shown on television in Delhi every Sunday. For Baba's main concern is to see His children devotees happy. He cannot see them unhappy.

(*viii*) In two chits only, there are references to Puttaparthi, Baba's permanent Ashram. In one chit, He wrote, "I now go to Puttaparthi and shall return after eating," and in another He has written "Not now," in response to Nina's parents' wish that they be called by Baba to visit Puttaparthi.

(*ix*) There is mention in 200th chit about a devotees's Liza dog being invited to a bhajan and being made to sit on a chair while all the devotees were to sit on the ground. Later on Baba sent another chit saying that Liza should not be seated on a chair. This shows two things: firstly, animals also have souls, and secondly, Baba knows their past, present, and future, and so He respects and loves the most blessed ones who might have done good actions in their previous human lives. The theory of the cycle of birth and rebirth upheld by the Hindu religion and by Baba also, very clearly gets established by such interesting proofs.

(*x*) Baba's politeness and respectfulness towards His devotees is revealed by these chits also. To the householder He addresses as "Swami" or "Father", and to the lady of the house He addresses as "Mother". To the grandmother of the children, he addresses as "Amma", as has been seen in the chits appearing at S.B.

Singh's house.*

In many of the chits, He has written either in English or in Hindi "Thank you." How courteous Baba is!

(*xi*) It is very clearly and empirically proved by these messages that Baba is always present in His invisible form in every house or place and He sees all that happens. But in the houses of His specially blessed devotees (as that of Nina, Singh, and many others throughout the world) He responds through a variety of media (through written chits, writing with vibhuti, honey, sugar, rice, vermillion, coloured powder, and even by appearing in dreams). His omnipresence and omnipotence, which are the attributes of God, are thus totally proved. What more empirical evidences do physical and social scientists need to agree that God has indeed appeared in His Human form on this earth again in ihe form of Sri Sathya Sai Baba?

(*xii*) The daily diaries filled in by the Sai devotees' children attending Bal Vikas classes are often checked or examined by Baba invisibly. Baba invariably initials then, crosses false entries, tickmarks correct entries, and sometimes inserts remarks like "Good," "Fair." All the more surprising is that He makes turmeric powder or rice (which are considered to be very auspicious by Hindus) appear between the pages of the Bal Vikas children's diaries many times.

(*xiii*) Baba condemns gossip-mongering, backbiting, ill talk, irritation, anger, and unnecessary harassment of anybody by anyone, and this is very clearly indicated by a number of His messages.

(*xiv*) A number of chits have appeared to bring to the notice of the members of the family that the Divine Gifts sent by Him have just appeared in their house, and that they should collect them. This has happened when Baba's hair, vibhuti, snacks etc have appeared in their houses.

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*Since the size of this book has grown so much, we have had to delete Miss Kiran Singh's most interesting long article on "Some Empirical Evidences of Sai Baba's Omnipresence and Omnipotence."

(*xv*) In many chits, Baba has written, "I will not answer," or "Do not ask such a question," "Do not ask such a question now." Such replies by Him are invariably in response to those questions by the members of the family and outsiders which are concerning material or personal things like transfer, business gains etc. Baba wants spiritual questions to be asked but devotees keep clamouring for advance information about material benefits. Baba generally discourages this tendency.

(*xvi*) In some chits Baba has, like the innocent-looking yet naughty, loving Child Krishna, admitted of his stealingly eaten some sugar from the packet of sugar purchased by Nina, drinking water from the jug, applying Iodex medicine when He had slipped on the ground due to the smooth floor etc.

(*xvii*) In some chits, Baba has congratulated the persons whose birthdays were being celebrated in the house. Baba sees and knows all, and He readily and spiritedly joins the members of the family in their happiness and love. Repeatedly Baba has told us in His discourses that "My form is Love. Only through Love you can achieve me; I can be bound, made your most humble servant, only through Love. That these are not merely vague religious statements but in fact the eternal truth has been very convincingly proved by these miraculous writings by our Living God.

(*xviii*) That Baba joins children in their doll play, games, dramas, songs, playing upon musical instruments etc is established by these miraculous chits, This should be a lesson for most parents who are authoritarian in nature and who disregard children's natural instinct of play.

EPILOGUE

The analysis of these messages could be carried further by more competent researchers than the present author. All these chits are readily available for inspection by anyone, who doubts their genuineness or who wishes to see them for further examination and analysis, with the said family.

These chits clearly show how childlike Baba is with the earnest and pious children of his devotees, and being omnipresent and omnipotent, how fully He knows every thing present in everyone's heart. Above all, He is visibly as well as invisibly acting as a great harbinger of a new Era—the Sai Era of love, peace, and spiritual advancement throughout the world in which the little beings blessed by Him today would be leaders tomorrow. Thus these miraculous chits from Sai Baba have a great lesson and challenge for all scientists—physical as well as social scientists throughout the world. Earnest and qualified researchers should now come forward from all the countries of world to study and unravel the secrets of this unique Divine Sai phenomenon which holds the greatest promise for the welfare and spiritual advancement of twentieth century man, unparalleled in the history of human civilization. If this open challenge is not studied by the scientists now, then they will be blamed and condemned by future generations for their shying away to face this greatest of all challenges before them today.

Baba is there, open to everybody at Puttaparthi or Brindavan (Post Kadugodi, Bangalore), with His open declarations as under:

"I have come in order to repair the ancient highway leading man to God.... I came in response to the prayers of sages, saints and seekers for the restoration of dharma."

"The miracle is the evidence of God having created the world out of His will. Science, which cannot comprehend this, scoffs at the idea of the physical universe arising from God's will as taught in the Bible."

"It is not easy to understand My own Mystery. When you have the chance, gather all the joy you can. . . .Remember, you have to come to Me, if not in this birth, at least within ten more births, Strive to acquire the Grace."

28. SAYINGS OF SAI BABA

1. Love is God. Live in Love.

2. Work is worship. Duty is God.

3. Devotion must be tested in the crucible of discipline. It must be directed along the lines of duty.

4. Education without character, science without humanity, commerce without morality are useless and dangerous.

5. There are four F's that you will have to fix before your attention: Follow the Master, Face the devil, Fight to the end, and Finish at the goal. Follow the Master means observe dharma. Face the devil means overcome the temptations that beset you when you try to earn wealth or wherewithal to live in comfort. Fight to the end means struggle ceaselessly; wage war against the six enemies that are led by Kama or lust. And finally, Finish at the goal, means, do not stop until the goal of Moksha or Liberation from ignorance and delusion ceases.

6. Everybody is saying, "I want peace." Peace is like a letter in an envelope. The I of "I want peace" is the front part of the envelope and "want" is the back. The "Peace" itself is the letter inside. Throw away the envelope, with its "I" and "want"; keep the precious letter of peace.

7. The fundamental cause for the rise in prices of commodities is the decline in the price of man. Man must realize his priceless-

ness; he should not regard himself as a cheap nut or bolt, that he has no higher purpose in life. He should know that he is the imperishable, unconquerable Atma and the body is only a vehicle for the Atma.

8. Man has to worship God in the form of man. God appears before him as a blind beggar, an idiot, a leper, a child, a decrepit old man, a criminal, or a mad man. You must see even behind these veils, the Divine Embodiment of Love, Power and Wisdom, the Sai, and worship Him through seva or service.

9. The strength of dharma alone is the true strength. Truth and not the strength of the weapons is the real intrinsic strength.

10. Religions are different but the goal is the same; even as the cows may be different in colour but the milk is the same; ornaments may be different in shape but the gold is the same.

11. Remove this ego boundary, then only can you recognize the vastness of yourself.

12. My task is the spiritual regeneration of humanity through truth and love. I have come to show you how to live usefully and die profitably! If you approach one step nearer to Me, I shall advance three steps toward you.

13. You will not be wrong if you characterize Me as the personification of love.

14. My mission is to grant you courage and joy, to drive away weakness and fear.

15. Even those who swear that they did not find any trace of God in the depths of space, or who aver that God is dead, or that

even if alive, He has outlived His use for man, that He has ever been a handicap and a costly nuisance for man, they too have to admit that there is something inscrutable beyond the reach of reason, something which pervades the world and reveals itself in Love, Renunciation, and Service. That something is God.

16. I do not want you to think that I desire this Name and this Form to be publicised. I have not come to set afoot a new cult. Know that this Sai Form is the form of all the various names that man has used, and uses now, to identify and adore the one Divine. So, I teach that no distinction should be made between the names—Rama, Krishna, Ishwara, Sai—for, they are, all of them, My names.

17. Many of you plead for a message from Me. Well, My life is My message. You will be adhering to My message if you so live that your lives become the evidences of dispassion, courage and confidence, revealing eagerness to serve those who are in distress.

18. Start early, drive slowly, reach safely.

19. This human form (of Sai) is one in which every divine entity, every divine principle, that is to say, all the names and forms ascribed by man to God, are manifest. Do not allow doubt to distract you. If you only install in the altar of your heart steady faith in My Divinity, you can win a vision of My Reality.

20. As far as I am concerned, there is only one role that binds Me: love. That love will quieten you, it will comfort you, it will inspire you to merge with Me.

21. Every time the hand is lifted, lift it for Him. If you lift the hand to help, to serve, to console, to encourage another man, you are lifting it for God. Because in every man there is God, use all your talents for serving others; that is the best way of serving

yourself.

22. I do not accept from you flowers that fade, fruits that rot, coins that have no currency beyond the boundary; give Me the Lotus that blooms in your Manasa-sarovara, in the pure pellucid waters of your inner consciousness; give Me the fruit of your holiness and steady discipline.

23. No nation can be built strong and stable, except on the spiritual culture of its women.

24. An educational system that keeps children away from God —the only refuge, the only kinsman, the only guide and guard— is a system where the blind are engaged in blinding those who long for light.

25. To take upon Myself the sufferings of those who have surrendered to Me is My duty. I have no suffering and you have no reason to suffer too when I do this duty of Mine. The entire give-and-take is the play of love. It is taken over by Me in love, so how can I suffer. Christ sacrificed His life for the sake of those who put their faith in Him. He propagated the truth that is God, sacrifice is God.

26. Fear is the biggest cause of illness. Transfer your faith from pill to Providence; put your trust in Madhava (God), not in medicines; resort to prayers, sadhana, dhyanam and not to injections. They are the vitamins you need. No tablet is as efficacious as Rama-Nam. Accept the sadhna way to peace and happiness and health.

27. Man must be both bright and light, like the lamp that floats on the Ganga at Hardwar. If the weight of the worldly desire is added, the lamp will sink and the light will go out.

28. Mine is no mesmerism, miracle or magic. Mine is genuine Divine power. Small minds and limited intellects cannot comprehend them. They have no strength or stamina to grasp the magnificence and majesty. God can do anything. He has all powers in the Palm of His Hand. My Body, like all bodies, is a temporary habitation, but My power is eternal, all pervasive, ever-dominant.

29. My mission is to raise the consciousness of man to a level at which he neither rejoices nor mourns over anything. In that supreme state, one is going through rebirth and redeath each moment, for these acts are one and the same, emerging from the formless into form, merging from the form into the formless. Then, there is no success or adversity, no joy or pain. When the devotee attains this Oneness, his journey towards Me ceases. For, he will be with Me endlessly.

30. Walk this earth, with your head held high, your spirits soaring, your heart open to Love. Believe in yourself and in the God within you. Then all will go well. Wherever you walk, I am there. Whomsoever you contact, I am in that person. I am in each. From each, I will respond. You cannot see Me in one place, and miss Me in another! For, I fill all space. You cannot escape Me, or do anything in secret.

31. Life as a worker is most valuable and fundamental. Work, worship and wisdom are three stages on the Godward path.

32. Seek the light always: be full of confidence and zest. Do not yield to despair; it can never produce results.

33. Engage always in good deeds, beneficial activities, speak the truth, do not inflict pain by word or deed or even thought. That is the way to gain Shanti; that is the highest gain you can earn in this life.

34. Drop the delusion that you have become old or diseased, or that you have become weak and debilitated. . . . But remember, elation is Heaven, despondence is Hell. Have always some work to do and do it so well that you get joy.

35. Splendour, prosperity, wisdom, non-attatchment, creation, preservation and destruction—these seven are the unfailing characteristics of avatars. Wherever these are found, you can identify Godhead.

36. The cry of equality now being used as a slogan is a vain and meaningless cry; for how can man, inheriting a multiplicity of impulses, skills, qualities, tendencies, attitudes, and even diseases from his ancestors and from his own history be all of the same stamp. . . . Those who promote inequality are those who most loudly proclaim this modern doctrine of equality.

37. Each one can realize the Lord in each one's assignment of duty, in each one's dharmic life.

38. The Lord is ever behind you, turn your back from the world. He is face to face with you.

39. I don't want you to extol Me; I shall be satisfied if you rely on Me.

40. Be fair, be true, be strong in your convictions. Then you have My blessings in all that you undertake.

41. Seva in all its forms, all the world over, is primarily sadhna. It is spiritual discipline of mental cleanup.

42. Don't analyze and allot blame. Sympathise and shower love.

43. Endurance with joyful resignation of the ups and downs of life is the real road to peace.

44. Purify your vision, sweeten your speech, sanctify your deeds—that way lies liberation.

45. I declare that I am in everyone, in every being. So do not hate anyone, or cavil at any one. Spread Prema always, everywhere. That is the best way of revering Me.

46. Turn the key to the right, it is unlocked. Turn to God and righteousness, the lock opens, the chain falls away. Turn to the left, you become bound; the bolt falls in; the chain holds fast. It is just a question of the point of view—Outlook or Inlook? Out-query or In-query?

47. Remember, you have to come to Me, if not in this birth, at least within ten more births. Strive to acquire Grace; Grace is the reward for sadhana; the highest sadhana is to follow the instructions of the Master.

48. It does not matter a bit if you have no faith in Me or in God. Have faith in yourselves, that is enough. For, who are you really? Each of you is Divinity, whether you know it or not.

49. Practice—that is the real thing in spiritual matters. Scholarship is a burden; it is very often a handicap. So long as God is believed to be far away, in temples and holy places, man will feel religion a burden and a hurdle. But, plant Him in your heart and you feel light, burdenless, and even strong.

50. Live in the consuming conviction that you are the Atman. That is the hard core of the Sanathana teaching.

51. Take a dose of dhyanam and japamas for morning breakfast, puja and archana as lunch at noon, some sathsanga or sath-chinthana or sath-grathparayana or namalikhithya as afternoon tea and snacks, an hour of bhajana as dinner and a small ten-minute manana as the cup of milk before going to bed. That diet is enough to keep your inner being happy and healthy.

52. Patience is all the strength the man needs.

53. It is easy to conquer anger through love, attachment through reasoning, falsehood through truth, bad through good, and greed through charity.

54. The end of wisdom is freedom, the end of culture is perfection, the end of knowledge is love, the end of education is character.

55. Many of you have seen in railway compartments the notice "Less luggage makes travel more comfortable." In that sense, our life is a long journey. This long journey, because we are accumulating a lot of luggage in the form of many desires, becomes somewhat troublesome. When we can diminish this luggage consisting of desires, then to some extent our journey of life is going to be less troublesome.

56. There are many bulbs with different voltages and different colours. But in all these bulbs there is only one current. Even though we may see many forms, many names, various things in this world, many races, many creeds and many castes in this world, we must know that God is present in all of them, the inner being is in reality only one.

57. Students must forget two things. Firstly, you must forget whatever help you have done to others. Secondly, you must forget whatever harm others have done to you.

58. Indians must all be united and, through unity, try to safeguard the higher values of Indian culture. India has been a leader and a sacred country which has given spiritual leadership to the entire world for centuries. All the great cultures which have been accepted in other countries originated at some time or other and in some form or other in this sacred land.

59. The Advaita philosophy preaches the oneness of *Jiva* (Body), *Ishwara* (God), and *Prakriti* (Nature). The Prakriti is the gross form and the Jiva is the subtle form. The same life pulsates between the gross and the subtle.

60. Money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows.

61. The name of the Lord must dance on your tongues for ever.... The Lord's name is like an effulgent lamp.... Your mouth is the main entrance to the house of the body. When you have a lantern at the main gate, the light can be seen without and within. So the sacred flame of the holy name sheds light inward and outward.

62. Good education is only that which unfolds all the hidden powers in man.

63. Real education requires the cultivation of a sense of humility. Great learning brings great humility. Without humility, there is no education. That is wanting in the youth of today.

64. You suffer now because all your attachment is toward Nature, and all your denial is of God. This has to be reversed. You must cultivate non-attachment towards Nature and attachment towards God.

65. Above all, do every act as an offering to the Lord, without

being elated by success or dejected by defeat; this gives the poise and equanimity for sailing through the waters of the ocean of life.

66. Come, I am the repairer of broken hearts, of damaged Anthah-karnas. I am like the smith, who welds, mends and sets right.

67. Your lives are intertwined with My Earthly Career. Act always in accordance with that great privilege.

68. Remember, Sai does not live in structures of stone or brick and mortar. He lives in soft hearts, warm with sympathy and fragrant with universal love.

69. You are the cause of your ruin or uplift. The tools are in your hands; you can learn the skills; you can break the shackles and escape; but if you grovel in slavery and bondage, who can save you? Do not blame Fate or siro-likhitham (writing on the head) for your condition.

70. Shed tears but only for joy that you are released from the chain of desires.

71. Whoever you are, you are Mine. I will not give you up. Wherever you are, you are near Me; you cannot go beyond My reach.

72. Consider all your acts as worship. Duty is God; work is worship. Whatever happens, accept it gladly as His handiwork, a sign of His compassion.

73. I seek the quality of the spiritual effort, not the quantity.

74. God weighs the love that prompts you to save, the

compassion that urges you to alleviate pain. Sathya Sai organizations must take up seva as sadhna, must see Me as *Sarvantaryami* (All-knowing, and do seva as puja).

75. There is only one caste—the caste of humanity. There is only one language— the language of love. There is only one God —He is omnipresent.

76. You should never underestimate your powers; engage yourselves in action commensurate with that power. For the rest, talk of destiny to your hearts content. It is wrong to desist from the appropriate karma, placing reliance on destiny. If you do so, even destiny will slip out of your hands. Whoever he be, he must engage himself in karma.

77. No one can understand my mystery. The best thing you can do is to get immersed in it. There is no use arguing about pros and cons; live and know the depth; eat and know the taste. Then you can discuss me to your heart's content. Develop truth and love and then you need not even pray to be granted this and that. Everything will be added unto you unasked.

78. The Lord will reward by His grace the work that is done sincerely and gladly, not work that is done through fear of superior officers. If your heart is pure, then your work will be pure.

79. Whenever I appear in a dream, it is to communicate something to the individual; it is not a mere dream, as is generally known. It is a real appearance.

80. This Love is My distinctive mark, not the creation of material objects or of health and happiness, by sheer exercise of will. You might consider what you call miracles as the most direct sign of Divinity, but the Love that welcomes you all, that

blesses all, that makes Me run to the presence of the seekers, the suffering and the distressed in distant lands or wherever they are, that is the real sign. It is that which declares that I am Sai Baba.

81. The only method which you can adopt to escape from the coils of the mind is the cultivation of pure intelligence. This is the sum and substance of all spiritual discipline.

82. Love lives by giving and forgetting, Self lives by getting and forgetting.

83. Remember, with each act of love and service, you are nearing the divine presence; with each act of hate and grab, you are moving farther and farther away.

84. Cleanse the mind of all the animal and primitive impulses which have shaped it from birth to birth.

85. Calling the Lord's name is essentially beneficial. Only you do not really believe that it can cure you or save you. That is the tragedy.

86. Such is the fate of man: he has always ignored God and pursued the paltry joys of pride and greed.

87. Why make a sad world sadder by one's desperate counsel, lamentations and suffering? Adopt worship to assuage your own grief, overcome your own sorrow and plunge into the cool waves of the sea of the Grace of God.

88. Devotion is not a uniform to be worn on certain days when you gather for worship and then be laid aside when the service is over. It must mean the promotion of an attitude that is ever present. It is the sustenance of the heart, just as food is sustenance

for the body.

89. All that suffers change is unreal; reality alone is changeless, stable, permanent.

90. Joy and peace do not exist in external objects; they are in you, in yourself.

91. Culture must be directed towards the reform of character.

92. Wherever my followers sing of Me, there I will instal Myself. The Lord is always there and everywhere, whether you sing of Him or not. The singing only makes Him manifest, as the radio receiver catches the tune from the other when it is switched on to the correct wave length.

93. Ceaseless contemplation of the Lord will give you ceaseless taste of sacred nectar.

94. For the contented man, life is an endless festival.

95. Education is a slow process like the unfoldment of a bud, the fragrance becoming deeper and more perceptible with the silent blossoming petal by petal of the entire flower.

96. It is work that is done in the spirit of the constant presence of the Lord that is honest. The Lord will reward by His grace the work that is done sincerely and gladly, not work that is done through fear of superior officers.

97. You may question and even doubt the possibility of the Lord dwelling in every being. But have you not seen one single mango seed grow into a tree which gives forth thousands of fruits, in each of which there is to be found a seed identical to

the one which was first planted?

98. If you know where inside the egg resides the chicken, you will know where inside this creation dwells the Lord. The chicken is everywhere in the centre, the circumference, and the radial space.

99. Some says that knowledge is power but it is not true: character is power. Even the acquisition of knowledge requires good character.

100. The proof of the rain is in the wetness of the ground, the proof of devotion is in the peace the aspirant has attained.

101. Truth can never die, untruth can never live.

SAI BABA'S THREE COMMANDMENTS

Practice three things: *Ahimsa, Sathyam, Brahmacharya.*
Remember three things: *Death, Pains of Samsara, God.*
Remove three things: *Egoism, Desire, Attachment.*
Cultivate three things : *Humility, Fearlessness, Patience.*
Eradicate three things: *Lust, Anger, Greed.*
Love three things: *Liberation, The Wise, Selfless Service.*
Admire three things: *Generosity, Courage, Nobility.*
Hate three things: *Lust, Anger, Pride.*
Revere three things: *Guru, Renunciation, Discrimination.*
Control three things: *Tongue, Temper, Tossing of mind.*
Avoid three things: *Back-biting, Falsehood, Harshword.*

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GLOSSARY

Abheda	Indivisible.
Agni	Fire.
Ahamkar, Ahamkaram	Pride, egoism.
Anandam	Joy, pleasure, ecstasy.
An-Atma	Not Self, Non-Soul.
Amrit, Amrita, Amritam	Nectar, immortality.
Antahkarna	Inner heart, heart of hearts.
Anritha	Falsehood, injustice.
Anugraha	Grace of God.
Arpana	Offering to God.
Artha	Wealth.
Asanthi, Ashanti	Disquiet, lack of peace or bliss.
Atma	Soul
Atmabhasha	Language of the soul.
Atmajyoti	Splendour of soul.
Atma Rama	Rama, the dweller of the soul, God.
Atmatatwa	The essence of soul.
Avatar	Incarnation of God.
Avedana	Yearning.
Bhakta, Bhaktha	Devotee, follower.
Bhakti, Bhakthi	Devotion.
Buddhi	Intelligence.
Chit, Chith	Consciousness.
Chaitanya	Supreme Consciousness, emersed in the thoughts of God.
Dan, daan	Charity.
Darshan	Having the holy sight of a god or saint.

Daya	Kindness, mercy.
Deeksha	Moral or religious instruction.
Dev, Deva	God.
Dhairyam	Courage.
Dharma	Religion, duty.
Dharma-rakshana	Saving or upholding the religion.
Dharna	Practice.
Dhyan, Dhyanam	Meditation.
Drasti	Vision.
Dukha	Misery, pain.
Guna	Qualities.
Isht, Istha	One's favourite God.
Iswara	God.
Jagat	World.
Japamala	Garland of beads.
Jivatma	Soul living in the heart of a living being.
Jnana, Gyan	Knowledge.
Jyoti	Light.
Kaalchakra	Cycle of time, destiny.
Kaalswaroopa	Time as God.
Kama	Pleasure including sexual pleasure, enjoyment.
Karma	Actions, fate.
Karuna	Pity, sympathy, kindness.
Kiran	Ray of light.
Krodha	Anger.
Laksham	Goal, aim.
Lokaguru	Teacher of the world.
Madhav	God, Krishna.
Mahashakti	Great power, Sai Baba.
Manas	Heart, man.
Manophal	Desire of heart.
Manan	Study, introspection, deep thinking.
Marg	Path, way.

Maya	Illusion, nature.
Mithya	False, untrue.
Moha	Attachment.
Moksha	Salvation.
Mukti	Salvation.
Mulaprakriti	Primal nature.
Narayan	God.
Nityakarma	Daily actions.
OM	The Divine Sound, name of God. Also called *Pranava*.
Paramatma	The Greatest Soul, God.
Paramhamsa, Paramhansa	The Supreme Soul, God, saint.
Pasu, Pashu	Animal.
Poorvakarma	Actions in past life or lives.
Prabhu	God.
Pratyaksha	Present before oneself.
Prasanti, Prashanthi	Highest peace.
Prema, Prem,	Love.
Premaswaroopa	The form of love.
Purush	God.
Sahaj Prema	Genuine Love.
Sakshtakara	Physical presence.
Samskaram	Purificatory rites.
Sankalpa	Determination.
Saraam	Truth.
Shantam, Shant, Santam	Peace.
Sharnagati	Shelter.
Shastras	Scriptures.
Shivam, Sivam, Shiv, Shiva	Lord Shiva.
Shuddha	Pure.
Smriti	Memory.

Sparsh	Touch.
Sraddha	Faith, respect.
Tapas, thapas,	Penance, meditation.
Tyaga	Sacrifice, austerity.
Upasana	Worship.
Updesam	Preaching.
Vedna	Pain, misery.
Vidya	Knowledge.
Viswas, Vishwas	Faith, belief.
Viveka	Discrimination.

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